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THE · TEMPLE  
SERIES · OF · BIBLE  
CHARACTERS  
& · SCRIPTURE  
HANDBOOKS

THE · AGE  
OF · THE  
MACCABEES

BY · REV · H · F  
HENDERSON · M · A ·

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*THE TEMPLE SERIES*  
*OF BIBLE HANDBOOKS*

EDITED BY

OLIPHANT SMEATON, M.A.

THE AGE OF  
THE MACCABEES

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The Slaughter of the Seven Martyr Children and their Mother at Jerusalem, by order of Antiochus for refusing to defile themselves by eating Swine's flesh.

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# THE AGE OF THE MACCABEES

BY  
REV. H. F. HENDERSON,  
M.A.



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## INTRODUCTION

IN order to understand the world in which the makers of the New Testament lived, it is not enough to know the Old Testament. We must make ourselves acquainted with the centuries immediately preceding the times of Christ, when the people of Israel were confronted with the iron rule of pagan imperialism and with the inroads of pagan culture, and maintained a continuous struggle alike for the preservation of their faith and the regaining of their independence. Yet this is not a period that is as well known as it ought to be by the ordinary reader of the New Testament at the present day. In days not long distant, when the Old Testament *Apocrypha* used to be bound up with the Bible, our forefathers had a better opportunity of knowing something about it than we have, especially when they read the fascinating chapters of the books of the Maccabees. The story therein recorded of Judas Maccabæus and his Age, besides supplying us with information requisite for an appreciation of New Testament parties and problems, introduces us to a chapter of Jewish history no less stirring and heroic than the period of the wars of Joshua and David. As the late Bishop Westcott

wrote, "History offers no parallel to the undaunted courage with which the Maccabæan brothers dared to face death, one by one, in the maintenance of a holy cause. The result was worthy of the sacrifice. The Maccabees inspired a subject people with independence; they found a few personal followers, and they left a nation."

It is well known how Handel placed a fitting garland on the memory of the Jewish hero by composing music for an oratorio, the words of which were written by an English Doctor of Divinity, to celebrate the return of the Duke of Cumberland after he had quelled the rebellion of 1745. Every one of us has been stirred by the chorus sung by Israelitish youths and maidens when they meet Judas Maccabæus on his return from his victory over Nicanor:—

"See the conquering hero comes,  
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums;  
Sports prepare, the laurels bring,  
Songs of triumph to him sing.  
See the god-like youth advance,  
Breathe the flutes and lead the dance;  
Myrtle wreaths and roses twine,  
To deck the hero's brow divine."

Nor does the conflict of the Maccabæan brethren described in the following pages of this handbook possess mere historic and romantic value. The principles underlying the struggle, in so far as these stood for the supreme claims of the Divine law as against an unrighteous and unspiritual view of man's



destiny, are still the basis and bulwark of all well-ordered modern life. As Mr Bevan in his learned treatise on *The House of Seleucus* well says, "It is a moment of profound significance for all future time—this first trial of strength between the religion of Israel and Hellenic culture. The principles engaged are so vast that our sympathies to-day, when we consider that first moment of conflict, cannot be determined by mere historical criticism. The conflict is still with us, in modern society, in our own minds."



## CHAPTER I

### CONTACT WITH HELLENISM

1. *The Persian and Greek Yokes.*—During the post-exilic period, the Jews of that time felt the Persian yoke a grievous and intolerable burden. They accordingly welcomed a change of tyrant in the person of Alexander the Great. To that victorious commander they cheerfully resigned themselves, looking to him for a measure of toleration and favour they had not hitherto enjoyed. If we are to believe Josephus, the Macedonian ruler bestowed upon them certain substantial benefits as a token or sample of what they might expect under his rule. After his day, a serious struggle ensued for the government of the country, in which three different competitors aspired to the position of ruler, Antigonus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. The Battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C. decided the quarrel in Ptolemy's favour. On the whole, this was a happy conclusion of the matter so far as concerned both the religious and the secular interests of the Jews. The first three Ptolemies were wise statesmen, who permitted the Jews to indulge their own peculiarities and to sit

under their vine and fig trees without molestation. In process of time, however, a change of affairs took place. Somewhere about 198 B.C. the Egyptian army was driven from the Holy Land, a new reign inaugurated—that of the Seleucids—and a set of influences introduced destined to exercise a dangerous fascination over the inhabitants of the land. And so the dream of Alexander the Great bade fair to be realised. His ambition to conquer the world had been only the means to an end. His desire was to see Greek culture and custom universally spread, and his plan was to plant colonies of his countrymen in all the lands he conquered. This work went on after him until the spirit of Hellenism, as it is called, reached Palestine itself.

2. *How the Jew regarded his Gentile Neighbour.*—To the mind of an orthodox Jew, to whom the traditions and custom of his land were sacred, the world of Gentile habits and ideas was evil and abhorrent. Nor was such a man greatly moved by the threatened annihilation of Israel's faith and nationality under the influence of heathen government and thought. The power of paganism might prosper for a time. Sooner or later Jehovah would stir up His strength, and the arm of heathenism would be broken. This was the creed of the conservative Jew, and his attitude towards rampant Gentilism was a sullen endurance of insult and injustice and a stubborn abhorrence of Gentile novelties and innovations. He regarded these things with silent detestation,

remembered the covenant which God made with his fathers, and bided his time.

But there was another type of Jew who was more conciliatory and compromising. To him also the Gentile was an enemy of Jehovah, a despiser of the Divine law, not to be tolerated for what he was at present. But as he looked forward to the day when the Gentile would be Jehovah's subject and servant, he held him worthy to be regarded, not as an object of dislike, but of interest; one to be approached as near as it was safe to do so, rather than held at arm's length. He felt it his duty to find as many points of agreement as possible. About the time of the Maccabees this new spirit of comity between Jew and Gentile began to appear, and is seen reflected in books like *Jonah*, *Cohemoth*, and *Ecclesiasticus*. In these books Jehovah is seen displaying an interest in the Gentiles, in one case sending them a prophet to warn them of their sins, in another throwing the requirements of Jewish legalism into the background as something not at all fundamental, but fated to pass away, the essential and eternal requirement being to fear God and keep His commandments.

Now although the two different attitudes here described were not necessarily antagonistic or incompatible with one another, but might be found co-existing side by side, in point of fact they constituted two different ways of looking at the subject and divided people into sides. On the one hand there were those who ever held themselves separate

and aloof from the ways of the Gentiles, and opposed them by a determined and unyielding resistance. Such persons would not conform to Gentilism in the smallest jot or tittle. Let the Gentile come over to their law, or let his power be broken. Israel cannot turn her back upon her glorious past or be drawn into the vortex of heathen corruption. On the other hand, there were Jews who saw in vision a larger Divine polity and a world-wide Kingdom of God. They felt the spell of Greek life and culture, and they wished to share it. To them it might not be altogether an innocent world, but neither was it forbidden ground.

The party of stern principle and the party of accommodation, as they may be called, then divided Jewish society. Each contended for the mastery, and as time passed they were not brought nearer, but went farther apart. Both parties plied their followers with plausible arguments. The one appealed to the patriotic instinct and the august claims of the Divine law. The other counted on the power of liberal ideals, the love of novelty, and the favour of the ruling classes to win the day. "They who wanted to effect anything in the political world," says Schürer, "found that they must stand on a friendly footing with Hellenism." Hellenism accordingly proved attractive to all worldly-minded Jews, and to the upper ranks of the priesthood. For a time, as we shall see, the puritanical party fell into the shade, while the party of conformity became ascendant. Heathen habits of life and



worship thrust themselves forward without let or hindrance. Ultimately, however, under Judas Maccabæus and his successors, a powerful tide of resistance set in which, rising higher and higher, swept back the flood of heathen encroachment and arrogance, and at last restored the supremacy of strict Judaism.

3. *Spread of Hellenism.*—The liking for Hellenistic forms of life just referred to was not a growth natural to the soil of Judaism, but an importation from foreign lands where the Dispersion had taken deep root and flourished. The philosophic soil of Alexandria was its natural home. There, under the enlightened rule of Ptolemy I. and II., the Jews who had made Alexandria their home found much to encourage them in the cultivation of liberal sentiment. They found a ruler so emancipated from bigotry and intolerance that he sanctioned the translation of the Jewish Scriptures into Greek. Then again in the army and the civil service of Egypt, the Jews of the Dispersion who made Egypt their home, by their conspicuous ability won their way to appointments of influence and honour, to the deep mortification of the natives of the country, who ever afterwards regarded them with feelings of envy and dislike.

In this heathen atmosphere, so favourable to the destruction of provincialism, the Jewish character underwent changes of the most critical kind. Such changes were at first more frequently seen in places like Alexandria, where Jews abounded, and where, as we have just seen, they learned so well how to take

occasion by the hand. In such places the Jew rapidly succumbed to Greek habits of life, and, as we have said, found it advantageous and necessary to do so. By degrees the spirit of conformity travelled home to Jerusalem. The time came when the upper classes began to affect the peculiar tones and mannerisms of their Greek neighbours, and even to be ashamed of their own racial peculiarities.

In this degenerate yielding to the fashion of the hour, there were no transgressors so guilty as the higher ranks of the priesthood. The high priest himself often led the way in these unpatriotic courses. The high priest Jason, for instance, contributed a large amount of money to the maintenance of a heathen shrine at a festival in honour of Hercules. It is true the bearers of the gift, having the fear of God before their eyes, were shocked beyond measure at the conduct of the high priest, and instead of devoting the money to the purpose intended, spent it in building several war-galleys (2 Macc. iv. 18). The incident shows that many belonging to humbler walks of life than that of the aristocratic priestly caste refused to bow the knee to Baal or take the wages of unrighteousness.

4. *Introduction of Greek Manners and Customs.*—The Hellenising tendencies which, in the second and third centuries before Christ, influenced the ruling classes among the Jews, manifested themselves in the ordinary and familiar things of life. Thus they changed the naming of the months from the Hebrew to the



Greek nomenclature, and the era of the Seleucids, dating from 312 B.C., the year that saw Seleucus victorious over Antigonus, became now the point of reckoning in all civil contracts among the Jews, and so continued till the Middle Ages. Personal and family names also changed from the Hebrew to the Greek—Jehoiakim becoming Alcimus; Solomon, Alexander; Joseph, Menelaus; Judas, Aristobulus, and so forth. In still another detail of nomenclature the Hellenising spirit made its appearance. The Jewish inhabitants of Judæa and Jerusalem called themselves from this time, and allowed themselves to be called, *Antiochians*, or citizens of Antioch.

But these after all were trifling innovations, that even the stricter sort of Jews might easily tolerate. It was a different thing when the Greek palæstra was set up in Jerusalem under the immediate shadow of the Citadel. That was a graver symptom of corruption. In the palæstra young men belonging to well-known Jewish families might be seen taking part in the Greek sports instituted originally in honour of Hercules. They stripped themselves bare, ran, wrestled, leaped, and donned the hat used by the youth of Athens on such occasions. The love of the Greek games grew on the Jews so overpoweringly, that old and venerable men were to be found who could converse about nothing else; and it is said that during the pontificate of the worldly-minded Jason the very priests would run from the altar, leaving their religious duties unfinished, in order to witness the games and enjoy the excitements

of the palæstra; "by reason whereof," adds the chronicler, "sore calamity came upon them: for they had them to be their enemies and avengers whose custom they followed so earnestly and unto whom they desired to be like in all things. For it is not a light thing to do wickedly against the laws of God; but the time following shall declare these things."

## CHAPTER II

### THE PONTIFICATE

1. *Its Military and Political Importance.*—During the period covered by *the age of the Maccabees*, and indeed all through the period of Greek domination, the high priest was the most prominent official figure in the world of Jewish politics. He was to all intents and purposes a sovereign and a prince, a member of state more than a minister of religion. He spent part of his life no doubt performing religious duties—he officiated, for example, on the great day of Atonement, but hardly ever on ordinary occasions; more frequently his duties called him to the palace, to the council chamber, to the military camp, rather than to the temple and the altar.

It is important to remember this unique public character attaching to the office of high priest in the period with which we are dealing; and it is interesting to know

how the office, at first so closely associated with purely religious work, came to have this worldly character. This was how it came about. When the Jewish people ceased to have a king of their own and became subject to a foreign power, the Temple and the priesthood began to acquire a position and importance they had not in earlier and happier times. In the absence of a throne of the house of David, the Temple came to be looked upon as something more than a sacred shrine, and its priests regarded in another light than mere ministers of religion. They became heirs to many rights and privileges formerly invested in the sovereign—among them being the collecting of certain tithes and taxes that used to flow into the royal treasury—and they began to be regarded as the chief representatives of the nation, the guardians of the nation's weal, and the keepers of her honour. In the same way the Temple was not merely God's house of worship and prayer, but the one surviving monument of the people's national life, the last visible memorial of a great historic past. It is true the high priests of former times had always moved in the best circles of society; but in the period with which we are dealing the high-priestly house was the only hereditary family with acknowledged aristocratic claims, and the pontifex himself the chief magistrate of the state. As has been said, "When the high priest stood at the altar in all his princely state, when he poured out the libation amidst the blare of trumpets, and the singers lifted up their voice and all the people fell prostrate

in prayer till he descended and raised his hands in blessing, the slaves of the Greek or the Persian forgot for a moment their bondage and knew that the day of their redemption was near. The high priest, at such a moment, seemed to embody all the glory of the nation as the kings had done of old, and when the time came to strike a successful blow for freedom, it was a priestly house that led the nation to the victory which united in one person the functions of high priest and prince" (*vid. E. Biblica*, "Priest," 3846).

As the office of high priest rose in secular importance and increased in power and opulence, it was natural that worldly men should grasp at it, not for any moral and religious influence that still clung to it, but solely for its political splendour and princely revenues. Whenever it happened that the enviable post became vacant, bribery and corruption were regularly resorted to by those interested in the appointment. If at such a time the Syrian exchequer happened to be low, the office of high priest could be counted on as bringing in a goodly price. Yet it would be unjust to insinuate that all the holders of the office at this time were wolves in sheep's clothing, although the majority of them were so. The son of Sirach eulogises the noble character of one Simon, who occupied the office in the third century B.C., in these exuberant terms:—

"How glorious was he when the people gathered round him

At his coming forth out of the sanctuary!

As the morning star in the midst of a cloud,  
As the moon at the full :  
As the sun shining forth upon the temple of the  
Most High,  
And as the rainbow giving light in clouds of glory :  
As the flower of roses in the days of new fruits,  
As lilies at the water spring,  
As the shoot of the frankincense tree in the time of  
summer :  
As fire and incense in the censer,  
As a vessel all of beaten gold  
Adorned with all manner of precious stones :  
As an olive tree budding forth fruits,  
And as a cypress growing high among the clouds.  
When he took up the robe of glory,  
And put on the perfection of exultation,  
In the ascent of the holy altar,  
He made glorious the precinct of the sanctuary.”  
(Ecclus. l. 5-11, R.V.)

2. *Rival Competitors for the High Priesthood.*—The office of high priest being thus, as we have seen, a powerful and lucrative position, became the occasion of much unseemly wrangling and conspiracy. There were two families in particular that made themselves notorious by their scramble for the coveted prize. These were the families of the Oniadæ and of the Tobiadæ. Each had its own party principles and party cries. The Oniadæ were of the old traditional stock that gloried in all that separated the Jews from their neighbours. The Tobiadæ, again, belonged



to the new Hellenising party, that were for a freer intermingling in the life of their neighbours. The one believed it best for Israel to be true to herself and tenacious of her cherished ways. The other held it injurious to the national interests to stand aloof from intercourse with the world. Both parties had, therefore, much to say for themselves. There was good on both sides so far as principles went. But neither of them had overmuch sense of honour or rectitude in their methods of work. One of the Tobiadæ named Simon—himself a priest of some considerable rank—during the pontificate of Onias III. conspired against Onias to oust him from his office, and with that in view pursued certain scandalous tactics, part of which was to send secret information to King Seleucus touching a vast store of money existing in the Temple, that might be safely seized for the replenishment of the scanty royal coffers.

The king did not need to be told the news twice, but immediately despatched a messenger, one Heliodorus, under the colour of visiting certain cities of Phœnicia, to fetch the store of treasure. Heliodorus came to Jerusalem, and was received courteously enough by the authorities of the Temple. Upon intimating the true purpose of his mission, he was at once informed that the money referred to did not belong to the priests, but to a fund for widows and orphans which had been entrusted to the custody of the Temple. Heliodorus, however, pressed his

master's claims. When the citizens of Jerusalem heard of the king's demands they rose in tumult against the audacious proposals. The priests too invoked Heaven to look down and defend the rights of the defenceless. The high priest behaved as a man distraught. Heliodorus, in spite of all, determined to force a passage into the sanctuary of God and rifle the money chests. On the day he was expected to perform this act of sacrilege and robbery, the people ran out of their houses in frantic excitement, women covered with sackcloth lined the streets, the gates and walls of the city and the windows of the houses were crowded with excited multitudes, who all cried out to Heaven to avert the impending disaster. Heliodorus persisted in his resolve to lay hands on the sacred treasure.

But, according to the circumstantial and perhaps somewhat coloured narrative of 2nd Maccabees, a fearful judgment descended upon him in the very act. At the moment of his wicked triumph, an apparition is said to have been seen, that caused all who beheld it to fall fainting to the ground. There appeared in the air a horse with a terrible rider, which ran fiercely at Heliodorus, and smote him with its forefeet. At the same moment there stood by the guilty man two powerful youths, on each side one, who scourged him till he fell to the ground. Speechless he lay, and would have continued to lie, but he was restored to life and consciousness through the intercessions of Onias, who made atonement for him. The Temple

treasures were thus miraculously saved at that time, and when Heliodorus returned to his master, and was asked who might be a fit man to be sent once again for the Temple treasures, Heliodorus replied to the king, "If thou hast any enemy or traitor, send him thither, and thou shalt receive him *back* well scourged, if he *even* escape with his life; for in that place no doubt there is an especial power of God. For He that dwelleth in heaven hath His eye on that place and defendeth it, and He beateth and destroyeth them that come to hurt it" (2 Macc. iii. 37).

Let us now return to Simon, the author of this black conspiracy. When he saw that he had failed in his attempt to grasp the high priesthood for himself, he resorted to a more open course of tactics. He boldly accused Onias to the king, blaming him with working some underhand trickery, and so bringing the mission of Heliodorus to grief. Although there was not a word of truth in the charge, Onias felt bound to hasten to the court at Antioch to clear himself, feeling that he could not maintain his office as high priest under a charge of treason. It happened, however, that at this time (175 B.C.) King Seleucus died suddenly, having, as was said, had poison administered to him. The deceased king was succeeded by Antiochus IV., surnamed Epiphanes, under whom the affairs of Onias became involved in a deeper mesh of difficulties. It transpired that the new monarch refused to confirm Onias in his appointment as high priest, choosing to confer the



office on Jason, an unworthy brother of Onias, Jason having, in fact, bought the appointment by a liberal bribe. Thus the dignity of high priest, once the synonym of a holy and unworldly life, was bought and sold and plotted for by bands of scheming men. It carried with it too much wealth and power to be desired for its own sake; and the holder of it could hardly avoid falling into the snare that lies before all intriguing ambition, of fearing God too little and humouring royalty too much.

3. *The Priesthood of Jason and of Menelaus.*—The price which Jason paid to King Antiochus Epiphanes in return for the appointment to the high priest's office amounted to several hundred talents of silver. By such corrupt means he supplanted his own brother. As we shall see, he was paid back in his own coin by another supplanter later on. Apostate, as well as Simonist, Jason not only bought the high priest's office, but came to an understanding with the king to turn aside his countrymen from the strict habits of their own pure faith to the degrading pollutions of Heathenism. For this wicked conduct the chroniclers of the time can hardly find language severe enough to condemn him. They dismiss him from their narratives as a "profane and ungodly wretch, and no high priest." Dante (*Inf.* xix. 85) refers to the "ungodly wretch" in his *Divine Comedy* in scornful terms. Speaking of a certain Pope, who was a notorious Simonist, he calls him

"Another Jason he, such as we saw in Maccabees."

Such was Jason, and when he came to the close of his brief term of prosperity, he was succeeded, as we would expect, by a member of the rival house of the Tobiadæ. This was Menelaus, a brother of the Simon mentioned before. He had been despatched by Jason to the court, in the year 171 B.C., to make certain payments that were due to the king, and about other matters. Having been favoured with an audience of the king, he boldly offered a larger price than Jason had given for the high priesthood. The king, like an auctioneer, gave it to the higher bidder. Menelaus accordingly came back with the king's commission in his pocket. When Jason heard of his heartless expulsion from office, he fled into the land of the Ammonites.

Menelaus soon discovered that his new dignities were anything but a bed of roses. His own house, the Tobiadæ, naturally supported him, but the populace sympathised with the unfortunate Jason, and grew so angry over the matter that it required a Syrian army to suppress their turbulence. Then it turned out that Menelaus was destitute of funds wherewith to pay the stipulated sum to the king. In these straits he helped himself out of the temple treasury and became like his predecessor thief as well as Simonist. The populace hated Menelaus for these and other miserable misdeeds which he committed, and had they not been withheld through fear of the military, would have torn him to pieces limb from limb.

After Jason fled into the Ammonite country he made

one final attempt to reinstate himself in the place from which he had been supplanted. A false rumour having gone abroad that the king had died, Jason appeared at Jerusalem at the head of a thousand men. For a brief moment he became once again master of the situation, and caused the blood of his countrymen to be shed copiously, mistaking friends for foes in many instances. At last he was forced to retire to his place of hiding in the Ammonite territory without having retrieved his fortunes. In the end he came by a miserable but well-merited fate. Living the life of an alien, and being too well known to be easily hid, he was obliged to flee from one city to another, was pursued by all men like a wild beast, was universally despised as a forsaker of the laws of his God, was treated without pity or mercy as a traitor to his country, and finally was cast out into Egypt. "Thus he that had driven many out of their country perished in a strange land, retiring to the Lacedæmonians and thinking there to find succour by reason of his kindred ; and he that had cast out many unburied had none to mourn for him nor any solemn funerals at all nor sepulchre with his fathers" (2 Macc. v. 8).

When the king, who had been supposed to be dead, returned from his campaigns, he was greatly incensed at the bloody insurrection that had taken place in Jerusalem during his absence in Egypt, and thereupon proceeded with that wanton assault on the lives of the people and the treasures of the temple of which we shall hear more again. Menelaus now had his standing

as high priest secured to him in return for approving of the king's recent acts of bloodshed and sacrilege. He seems to have enjoyed the sweets of his high office for a number of years, but at last a day of vengeance visited him. It is difficult to account for the sudden change of feeling towards Menelaus that came over the court party, for he had served them more faithfully than his God. The chronicler says that the King of Kings opened the eyes of Antiochus Eupator, the reigning sovereign, to see that Menelaus was the real cause of all the mischief that had for years befallen the land, and that then the king commanded the wretched man to be brought to Berea and put to death after the manner of that place. It appears that in Berea was a tower where notorious criminals and persons guilty of sacrilege underwent a terrible death. The interior of the tower was full of ashes put into perpetual motion by some kind of revolving machine that kept the ashes in a continual stir and upheaval. Into this whirling cauldron of ashes the wretched Menelaus was flung, and thus closed his career of wickedness. It was a fearful end to come by, but the chronicler pronounces it a just end: "for inasmuch as he had committed many sins about the altar whose fire and ashes were holy, he received his death in ashes" (2 Macc. xiii. 7).

4. *Alcimus and Jonathan*.—Alcimus won his way to the great position of high priest by means far from creditable. He did so, in fact, by poisoning the mind of the upstart Demetrius (who seized the crown in

161 B.C.) against the great patriotic hero Judas Maccabæus. He was guilty of worse misdeeds. A company of pious men once came to him demanding justice, and because he was the high priest they in their simplicity trusted him fully. "One that is a priest of the seed of Aaron," said they, "will do us no wrong." They little knew their man. While he made fair speeches to them which they guilelessly believed, he gave orders for three score of them to be massacred in a single day. And yet he was the high priest of God's temple!

Jonathan's high priesthood—as became a son of old Mattathias, the priest of Modin—is a pleasanter story to tell than that of Jason, Menelaus, or Alcimus. It is not necessary to describe his character and work here, as that will be done in a subsequent chapter. At present two things only need be noted regarding his priesthood: (1) the greatest break in the hereditary succession to the priesthood occurred immediately previous to Jonathan's appointment; (2) it was during his reign as high priest that the Syrian government first recognised the independence of the Maccabean insurgents.



## CHAPTER III

ANTIOCHUS IV. (EPIPHANES), 175-164 B.C.  
HIS PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

1. *His Contempt for the Jews' Religion.*—Antiochus Epiphanes returned from his campaign in Egypt in the year 170 B.C. On his way home to Antioch, his capital, he paid a visit to his recalcitrant subjects the Jews, amongst whom, as we saw in the previous chapter, tumult and slaying of men had been rife. Thinking the city ripe for revolt, he thrust an army through the gates and began to administer punishment to the rebels. [He is said to have made the streets of Jerusalem run with blood, and to have given orders to the soldiers to mow down the people with unsparing slaughter. Young and old, men, women, and children, virgins and infants, all were mercilessly massacred. Those who betook themselves to the house roofs were followed thither and slain with the sword. Thousands of Jews perished at the hand of the infuriated despot.]

Antiochus was not only cruel; he was covetous. Not satisfied with spilling the blood of innocent people, he invaded the Temple and stole hence hundreds of talents of silver. In this way he paid his soldiers their wages and kept something for the improvement of his capital. The precious ornaments that other kings had erected in the Temple at Jerusalem for the glory of God, he tore down ruthlessly; and the sacred

vessels of the sanctuary, which none but the priests were permitted to handle, he flung about with profane levity. His lust being at length for the time satisfied, he and his army abandoned the work of butchery and sacrilege. One Philip, a Phrygian, remained behind in charge. Philip had the reputation of being fiercer and more wanton than he that set him in his place of command.

2. *The Abomination of Desolation.*—After the events just described, Antiochus invaded Egypt a second time. His aim was to take advantage of a disputed succession there. On his way across the borders of the country, he was stopped by command of a Roman envoy, who ordered him to leave Egypt at once. Antiochus requested time for deliberation, whereupon the proud Roman described a circle with his staff around the spot where he stood, and declared that before he stepped out of it an answer must be given. After this repulse Antiochus was not in the best humour, and returning home, he let loose his fury upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The first thing the soldiers of Antiochus did, was to turn what was known in Jerusalem as The City of David into a military fort, fully equipped and garrisoned, and to be known afterwards in Jewish history as Acra. This menace was intended to keep the inhabitants of Jerusalem in constant terror of their foreign rulers. The soldiers proceeded next, under orders from the Syrian king, to remove from the sanctuary all vessels, altars, and articles of furniture pertaining to Jehovah's

worship, and to substitute in their stead, altars and sacrifices in honour of Jupiter. On December 15, 168 B.C., "the Abomination of Desolation," spoken of by Daniel (xi. 31; comp. Matt. xxiv. 15), was set up in the holy place. In this familiar phrase, the Jews described the altar of Jupiter which was erected on that day in the Temple at Jerusalem, over the site of the great brazen altar of burnt-sacrifice which had been set up by the command of Jehovah. The heathen altar was appropriately named "the Abomination of Desolation," because it made the Jews abominate the place which they formerly loved, and caused it to be desolate and forsaken.

During this reign of hideous profanity the Temple courts became nothing short of loathsome to the Jews on account of the heathen worship and licentiousness that defiled the sacred precincts. They could not bear the sight of their outraged Temple, and fled from it to places of refuge in wilderness caverns. The Temple courts were neglected and fell into a state of desolation.

The madness of the persecutor withheld his hand from nothing that could humble and offend the Jews. He caused the sacred scriptures used in the Temple to be publicly burned. The holiest institutions of their religion—the observance of the Sabbath and the rite of circumcision—were forbidden on penalty of death. On December 25, those whose sense of duty caused them to remain in the accursed city, saw their cup of sorrow filled to the full. On that day a sacrifice was rendered in God's house to the Olympian Zeus, to



whom a splendid heathen temple had been dedicated at Antioch. In the course of that fatal day a herd of unclean swine were driven into the holy Temple and slain. The blood of a huge sow was poured out as a libation in the Holy of Holies. From the flesh of the animal a mess of broth was prepared and sprinkled on the copy of the Law. From that day forward the daily offerings ceased, the perpetual light of the great candlestick was extinguished, all men forsook the place they had learned to love so well.

Before this series of woes came upon the sanctuary at Jerusalem, a portent is said to have been witnessed similar to what has sometimes preceded the death of kings or the downfall of empires. For the space of forty days an apparition came and went that filled all hearts with dismay. Each day a troop of cavalry were seen careering through the air, attired in cloth of gold, and armed like bands of soldiers. They ran at one another, inflicting dreadful wounds and causing a confused din of shaking shields, clashing spears, and glitter of gold ornaments. When the fury of Antiochian persecution followed, there were many persons who interpreted the calamities as a Divine judgment upon the people for their sins. "So haughty was Antiochus in mind that he considered not that the Lord was angry for the sins of them that dwelt in the city and therefore His eye was not upon the place. For had they not been formerly wrapped in many sins, this man as soon as he had come had forthwith been scourged and put back from his presumption as Heliodorus was when

Seleucus the king sent to view the sanctuary. Nevertheless, God did not choose the people for the place's sake, but the place for the people's sake" (2 Macc. v. 17).

3. *The Political Motives of the Persecution.*—Antiochus, in these acts of persecution, was not moved by zeal for his own faith any more than was Charles II. for the cause of Episcopacy. In both cases, the zeal manifested in favour of the religion of the tyrant was mainly political. The Syrian monarch saw the Jews to be a turbulent people who clung stubbornly to customs that made them a source of danger to his government. He persisted in his insane course, rooting out Jehovah worship and thrusting heathen polytheism in its place, because he deemed it politic to do so, and ignorantly imagined the people ripe for religious Hellenism. Menelaus, as we have seen, was a Mr Pliable, who readily conformed to the ruling religion. Many of the upper classes in Jerusalem were of the same mind as this unfaithful priest. But the humbler classes among the people, as has often happened since, numbered in their ranks many staunch supporters of the true faith. The Scribes, a class that degenerated afterwards, were now an intrepid body of men who loyally adhered to the old order.

For a time it seemed as if the persecutors were to be allowed to proceed unchecked. Altars of heathendom sprang up everywhere, and heathen sacrifices became familiar objects. Processions in honour of Bacchus disgraced the village streets, and austere Jews found them-

selves forced to walk with wreaths of ivy on their head after the pagan fashion. Frivolous-minded Jews loved these novelties, and obsequiously fell in with the will of their masters. Others cherished a bitter grudge against all that savoured of polytheism, and nursed a righteous resentment towards everything that dishonoured God. These latter were ready to rise in revolt the moment the time came, and the man. Most suffered the affronts put upon their holy religion in a spirit of sullen endurance, and when dumb submission could no longer avail, heroically devoted their lives in martyrdom to the cause of God.

A section of the community organised a schismatic departure, and with Onias, son of the high priest, at their head, betook them to Egypt and instituted a new sanctuary. In 170 B.C., with the favour of Ptolemy VI., the reigning sovereign of the Delta, they built a Temple at Leontopolis, on the ruins of an Egyptian shrine. Many attached themselves to the new institution. It appeared to them the only way of keeping alive the flame of pure religion; and they saw in it the fulfilment of a prophecy of Isaiah: "In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Saviour and a great one, and he shall deliver them" (xix. 19).

Other good men, however, held sternly aloof from this schismatic departure, although entirely agreeing with the motives that prompted it. Honestly they felt they could not countenance an institution that might yet set up rival claims to the Temple at Jerusalem, and even attempt to supersede it. All the same they could not endure to see the dishonours that were done to their holy and beautiful House, where their fathers worshipped. Such conscientious souls accordingly took refuge in quiet desert caves, until better days should dawn. They gladly resorted to such places of concealment that they might pass their days in peace. But they were seldom permitted to gratify their desire. The cruel and unscrupulous agents of Antiochus followed them to their places of hiding in the wilderness, and opened battle on them usually on the Sabbath when the Jews would offer no resistance, and sometimes lighted fires at the mouth of the caves where they were concealed, that they might choke them to death or compel them to surrender.

4. *Martyrology of the Period.* — A considerable number of martyrdoms took place during this cruel time. Two deaths which were long remembered were those of Jewish mothers who, obedient to the traditions of their race, but in defiance of the will of their persecutors, caused their children to be circumcised. Their tormentors began by marching them through the streets of the city, with the babes hanging at their breasts. This they did as a salutary warning to others. They then swung them

aloft to the highest part of the city wall, and cast them down headlong on the pavement below.

Another story of martyrdom belonging to this time of terror is that of seven brothers who, along with their brave-hearted mother, suffered for their loyal adherence to the law of God. Representations of the heroic family group were favourite figures in the Church decorations of the Middle Ages, and they have been sometimes confounded with the Christian martyr Felicitas and her sons. The seven sons, one after the other, were brought before the king, by whose orders they were commanded to partake of swine's flesh: like strict Jews, each in turn refused to touch the cursed abomination; and for this each was subjected to cruel torture and death. But they all bore splendid dying testimonies that have made their memory immortal. One looking into the face of the king the while that his poor body was being brutally mangled exclaimed: "Thou hast power over men, thou art corruptible, thou dost what thou wilt; yet think not that our nation is forsaken of God: abide a while and behold his great power, how he will torment thee and thy seed." "After him also they brought the sixth, who being ready to die said, Be not deceived without cause: for we suffer these things for ourselves, having sinned against our God; therefore, marvellous things are done unto us. But think not thou, that takest in hand to strive against God, that thou shalt escape unpunished." "But the mother was marvellous above all and worthy of honourable memory: for when she



saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, she bore it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the Lord." The testimony borne by the last of the sons was to this effect: "But I, as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, beseeching God that he would speedily be merciful unto our nation: and that thou by torments and plagues mayst confess that he alone is God: and that in me and my brethren the wrath of the Almighty which is justly brought upon all our nation may cease. Then the king being in a rage handled him worse than all the rest, and took it grievously that he was mocked. So this man died undefiled and put his whole trust in the Lord. Last of all after the sons the mother died" (2 Macc. vii.).

The case of Eleazar, an aged man and one of the principal scribes, also deserves to be remembered. Forced to open his mouth and taste swine's flesh—a thing forbidden by the law—he immediately spat it out and abode the consequences. Eleazar was thereafter watched. Coming to one of the king's feasts, as he had occasion to do on account of his position, his friends besought him to bring food of his own providing with him, such as was lawful for him to use, and while really partaking thereof pretend to be eating of the flesh taken from the sacrifice commanded by the king. Eleazar refused to hearken to this advice. He wanted to be faithful unto death. "He began to consider discreetly and as became his age and the excellency of his ancient years and the honour of his

gray head, whereunto he was come, and his most honest education from a child, or rather the holy law made and given by God; therefore he answered accordingly and willed them straightways to send him to the grave. For it becometh not our age, said he, in any wise to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, being four score years old and ten, were now gone to a strange religion; and so they through mine hypocrisy and desire to live a little time and a moment longer should be deceived by me, and I get a stain to mine old age and make it abominable. For though for the present I should be delivered from the punishment of men; yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead. Wherefore manfully changing this life, I will show myself such an one as mine age requireth, and leave a notable example to such as be young to die willingly and courageously for the honourable and holy laws. And when he had said these words, immediately he went to the torment" (2 Macc. vi.).

5. *Death and Character of Antiochus Epiphanes.*—Antiochus Epiphanes came by a tragic end in 164 B.C. Having suffered an ignominious repulse in Persia, he directed his steps homeward in a sullen temper, breathing forth vengeance as usual against the Jews. He swore that he would turn their city into a graveyard. Swelling with rage, therefore, and charging his charioteer to drive without ceasing, he brought upon himself a sudden and fatal illness. In



spite of this, he continued the desperate journey, breathing out fire in his rage at the Jews, and commanding the charioteers to make haste. The horses, however, meeting on the way with some elephants took fright, and the king tumbled from his seat on the chariot board, falling heavily to the ground. "And thus he that a little afore thought he might command the waves of the sea (so proud was he beyond the condition of men) and weigh the high mountains in a balance, was now cast on the ground and carried in an horse-litter, showing forth unto all the manifest power of God, so that the worms rose up out of the body of this wicked man, and while he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell away, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to all his army." The same narrative goes on to tell how Antiochus before he died repented him of his evil deeds against the Jews, and promised, if he lived, to become a Jew himself, and go through all the inhabited world proclaiming the power of Jehovah. But for all this, his pains would not cease, for the just judgment of God was come upon him. Antiochus thus died miserably, in a strange country, and Philip, whose name we have already met, carried home the body to his own land.

As to the character of this emperor, historians have not been agreed. Some to whom the Jews were a hateful people have seen in him a would-be reformer, who followed violent but sincerely earnest methods. Tacitus

is one of these. His words are: "Rex Antiochus demere superstitionem et mores Græcorum dare adnissus, quominus teterrimam gentem in melius mutaret Parthorum bello prohibitus est" ("Antiochus strove to overthrow the superstition of the Jews, and to introduce among them Greek customs, but was prevented by the war with the Parthians from improving the condition of this most detestable race.")

Polybius, another chronicler of repute, presents quite a different picture of Antiochus. According to Polybius, he is neither murderer and blasphemer, as Josephus makes out; nor pioneer of civilisation, as Tacitus holds, but the foolish jester and buffoon, who would slip away from the palace and play practical jokes in the city, carouse with the meanest of his subjects, and enjoyed nothing more than to appear at one of their drinking bouts unexpectedly with horn and bag-pipe. His subjects could not easily make him out, some taking him for a simple, homely man, some looking upon him as crazed, others as an undignified jester. "He was wont," says Polybius, "to bathe in the public baths when they were quite full of their habitual visitors, where vessels of the most costly perfumes would be brought to him. When somebody once said to him, 'Happy art thou, O king, since thou hast such perfumes, and giveth forth such fragrance,' he went on the following day, without having said anything to the man, to the place where he bathed and showered upon his head the contents of a large vase of that most precious ointment called *stacte*; whereupon all

made a rush forward in order to wash themselves with the ointment. But on account of the slipperiness of the pavement many fell amidst shouts of laughter, the king himself joining in the mirth."

Probably the vein of senseless humour, which the narrative of Polybius ascribes to Antiochus, rather than any marked genius for government, was the leading feature of his character. It was certainly a most untimely joke to outrage the feelings of his Jewish subjects in the manner he did. Had he only wished to introduce Greek manners and civilisation among them—a change for which the majority of them were probably quite ready—certainly he took the best way to defeat his own desires. The great majority of Jews may have been ready to tolerate social and political changes, but when the sanctity of their Temple was openly and outrageously attacked, a movement set in in defence of the old faith, which not only resulted in rescuing it from the hands of those who would have extirpated it, but stiffened the backs of the Jewish people to resist the advance of Hellenistic changes that might have been improvements. This was the compensation reaped as a consequence of the persecuting measures of Antiochus. Judaism survived the attempt to kill it, and emerged from its encounter with the enemy a more determined foe.

## CHAPTER IV

MATTATHIAS (167-166 B.C.) AND HIS SONS

1. *The Aged Priest of Modin.*—We have seen that among the faithful of the land many were waiting for a Leader to arise, who should strike a blow for civil and religious freedom. The Law still numbered many firm supporters; and among them, men vied one with another in its praise. One of their sayings was—"A bastard who knows the Law takes precedence of a high priest if he is ignorant of it." "Let your house," said they, "be a house of assembly for those wise in the law; let yourselves be dusted by the dust of their feet, and drink eagerly their teaching." These men, then, were waiting for the hour and the man. Even under the worst provocations, up till now, they had offered no active resistance to their persecutors. What they did was to retire into the desert and pray for brighter days to dawn. When this asylum was denied them, they willingly yielded themselves up to their malignant foes. They knew the day would come, in God's own time, when He would avenge His people. "Who can encounter the sun at mid-summer? Every one escapes and seeks a shelter. So every one fled from the Grecian kingdom and its armies. Only the priest Mattathias and his sons remained faithful to God, and the armies

of Antiochus were dispersed before them and were exterminated" (Stanley, iii. 303).

Who was this aged priest Mattathias? He belonged to the priestly course of Joarib, and had retired with his five stalwart sons to their country residence at Modin, at the time of the Antiochian persecutions. Modin, a place of seclusion among the mountains of Judæa, to the north-west of Jerusalem, on the way to Lydda, afforded them a safe retreat, where they could remain out of harm's way, and keep their garments unstained by idolatry. The enemies of Jehovah's worship, however, pursued their persecuting tactics unceasingly. They penetrated everywhere, even into hidden mountain recesses, and wherever the industrious Jew had erected a habitation thither they conveyed themselves, unwelcome as a pestilence. In the course of their persistent advances they came to Modin, charged with cruel orders and reeking with profaneness and effrontery. It must have resembled the visit of Gessler, the tyrant's catspaw, to the Swiss Altdorf, or the coming of Tetzels, the Indulgence-Monger, to Frankfort-on-the-Oder. Those came as these, full of blatant self assurance, doing the devil's work, yet thinking not of the check they were to receive from this Jewish precursor of Tell and of Luther. Almost for the first time in their experience the agents of pagan tyranny found that they had met their match, and were ready to confess it would have been better for their cause had they passed Modin by, and left the old lion undisturbed in his



lair. The bolt was now about to descend on them, and their bad cause, from one of the most unlikely parts of the heaven. As Schürer says, speaking of the campaign that now set in against the Antiochian persecution: "Viewed from a human point of view it was a foolhardy enterprise; for how could the small nation of the Jews secure any permanent advantage over the forces of the king? But religious enthusiasm waits not to ask about possibilities of success" (i. 209).

2. "*We must obey God rather than men.*"—A stand was now made for God and revealed truth by Mattathias and his sons that will live long in the memory of the world. The old man was a chief in his mountain home and ruler among his people, exercised a powerful influence within his tribe and family, and enjoyed the honour and goodwill of his kinsmen and neighbours. To defeat him in a quarrel was to fire their blood: to reproach him was to insult them all. Such was the position of Mattathias. In the front rank among the owners of the soil, he was looked up to by them as a leader and spokesman whenever the occasion called for counsel or command.

At this time of peril in the nation's history he had not shown himself undecided as to the cause which had his sympathies. While as yet no organised resistance had been offered to the licentious inroads of heathenism, Mattathias is represented in the dirge over Jerusalem, put into his lips by the author of 1st Maccabees, as having already condemned these godless acts

in language that recalled the days of prophetic inspiration. "Woe is me," he said; "wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people and of the holy city, and to dwell there, when it was delivered into the hand of strangers? Her Temple is become as a man without glory. Her glorious vessels are carried away into captivity, her infants are slain in the streets, her young men with the sword of the enemy. What nation hath not had a part in her kingdom and gotten of her spoils? All her ornaments are taken away: of a free-woman she is become a bond-slave. And behold our sanctuary, even our beauty and our glory, is laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned it. To what end therefore should we live any longer?" (1 Macc. ii. 7). His five sons, without exception, were of one mind with their father, and associated themselves closely with him in his patriotic grief. Father and sons, we are told, rent their clothes in agony, put sackcloth on their loins, and mourned very sore. The time for silent submission was past, the time for active resistance had come.

Matters had reached a head with the erection of a heathen altar in the sequestered uplands of Modin. The altar was a challenge to Mattathias and his sons which they were not loath to accept, and which defiantly they hurled back in the faces of the officers of the king. With their usual effrontery these men invited Mattathias to come forward first, and fulfil the royal edict in the sight of his neighbours, as became their leader. The rascals even went the length of offering Mattathias



and his children the king's friendship in return for compliance with their wishes, and promised presents of gold and silver. Mattathias heard their speeches, and despised them. With a loud voice, to which many who were present said Amen, he cried: "Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand or the left" (*ibid.* 19).

Hardly had these brave words been uttered, when a Jew more base than his fellows stepped forward, and, undeterred by the decided attitude of the venerable priest, indicated his readiness to offer sacrifice on the heathen altar. Mattathias shook with indignation at the sight of this degenerate man. Burning with rage, he flew upon the apostate, and slew him where he stood. Once roused, the old man's ire was not easily cooled. Not satisfied with the death of one offender, he next ran his sword through the king's commissioner, determined, if possible, like another Phinehas, that the plague should be stayed. After this he flung down and demolished the heathen altar. The die was now cast, and rebellion declared. Mattathias issued a proclamation throughout Modin: "Whosoever is zealous of the Law and maintaineth the Covenant, let him follow me."

3. *Flight and Revolt of Mattathias*.—Mattathias and his sons forsook their home and their possessions in Modin and fled eastward across the mountains, into the wilderness of the Jordan. In that region they found safety and a secluded retreat, where they could gather their forces and become a rallying-point for all other rebels from the king's commands. The fate of the king's commissioner and of the apostate Jew speedily became known. The story flew like fire, from hill to hill and from valley to valley. It meant only one thing, viz., the declaration of religious war. These stirring events occurred in the year 167 B.C.

Mattathias and his sons were in a short time surrounded by a band of followers, forming indeed a motley company—from the desperado on the one hand, who defied all authority whatsoever, to the Hasidæan or “pious one” on the other, the member of a voluntary brotherhood—but all prepared to do battle for the Law. The presence of the Hasidæans gave the movement the character of respectability. Formed into a company of fighting men, with old Mattathias for their captain, the rebels traversed the country in a warlike mood, casting down heathen shrines wherever they met them, setting up the religion of Jehovah where it had been driven away, and punishing with the sword all wicked men who fell into their hands, more especially all renegade Jews. They lived the rough life of freebooters, herding together like cattle in the limestone quarries of the hill-land and among the caves and ravines of the Jordan valley, nourishing in their

aggrieved hearts a bitter grudge against Antiochian tyranny, and as ready themselves to die as to kill others in the sacred cause of God and freedom.

4. *The Sabbath and Self-Defence.*—The Jews of the second century before Christ were rigid Sabbatarians. They even refused to defend themselves and their homesteads if attacked on the Sabbath-day. The effect of such extreme scrupulousness was that this particular day was usually chosen by their enemies for making attacks upon them. At the time anterior to the Maccabæan rising, we frequently hear of the Jews being mowed down like grass, together with their wives, their little ones, and their grandsires, all because their law forbade them to do any manner of work on the Sabbath-day. Mattathias broke away from this extreme and suicidal observance of the Fourth Commandment. He and his ardent followers resolved to fight if attacked on the Sabbath-day. "Whosoever," said they, "shall come to make battle with us on the Sabbath-day, we will fight against him: neither will we die all as our brethren that were murdered in the secret places."

It was for that time a daring innovation in Jewish ideas, but it shows how warlike and determined were the party of revolt. Small in numbers as yet, but of invincible spirit, they knew that their cause was God's, and they did not think it would offend Him if they should be called to defend His honour on His own day. Mattathias and his followers were in this respect the natural forerunners of Jesus Christ, who answered

those who were slaves to the letter of the law in the words: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days or to do evil? to save life or to kill? Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?"

5. *Death and Burial of Mattathias.*—Mattathias was not a young man when the struggle in which he figured so illustriously began. He was even then far advanced in life; and shortly after striking the first blow in the cause which he had so valiantly espoused, he was gathered in peace to his fathers. He is said to have made a farewell speech to his sons, in which he exhorted them to be zealous in behalf of the law, and devote themselves to the covenant of their fathers. He bade them call to remembrance the righteous acts of former times and build for themselves an eternal record for truth and faithfulness. Thus would they live in honour and die gloriously. "Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness? Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment and was made lord of Egypt. Phinehas our father in being zealous and fervent obtained the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Joshua for fulfilling the word was made a judge in Israel. Caleb for bearing witness before the congregation obtained a heritage in the land. David for being merciful possessed the throne of an everlasting kingdom. Elijah for being zealous and fervent for the law was taken up into heaven. Hananiah, Azariah, and Misael, by believing, were saved out of the flame,

Daniel for his innocency was delivered from the mouth of lions. And thus," concluded he, "consider ye throughout all ages that none that put their trust in Him shall be overcome. . . . Wherefore ye, my sons, be valiant and show yourselves men in the behalf of the law: for by it shall ye obtain glory" (1 Macc. ii. 52-64). He did not omit the injunction to avenge all the wrongs of their countrymen, and give a full recompence to the heathen.

Nor did he forget to arrange for the future of their cause, as regards the choice of a leader. Of two of his sons did he make mention, to wit, Simon and Judas. The former he pronounced a man of good counsel, who would be a father to the rest, to whose advice they should ever more hearken. But to Judas was bequeathed the leadership. "He hath been mighty and strong, even from his youth up: let him be your captain and fight the battle of the people."

This speech which the chronicler puts into the mouth of Mattathias, is interesting from a critical point of view, because it contains the earliest reference on record to the book of Daniel, a book which was written about this time, and had a great influence on the course of the Maccabæan struggle. The veteran patriot died lamented by his followers, and was buried by his sons in the ancestral tomb at Modin. The family sepulchre acquired a great fame, as in due succession one son after another came to be buried in it.

Ewald bestows a well-merited eulogium on the old priest of Modin and his family: "If it was a stroke of



rare fortune that the insurrection thus broke out undesignedly and was set on foot by such a blameless character, it was no less fortunate that he left behind him a heroic band of five sons, who were ready to carry on the contest without an instant's delay. Seldom has the world seen an instance of five brothers animated by the same spirit and without mutual jealousy sacrificing themselves for the same cause, of whom one only survived another in order to carry it on, if possible with more zeal and success, while not one had anything in view but the great object for which his father had fallen." (In view of the fact that the war for religious freedom subsequently became a war for political independence, this last remark of Ewald's calls perhaps for some qualification.)

6. *The Names of the Brothers.*—The family name of Mattathias was Chasmon or Asmon ("the Magnate"), the derivation of which is obscure. According to Josephus it is from Asamonæus, the name of the grandfather of Mattathias (Ant. xii. 6, 1). Others derive it from the name of the place Hashmon (Joshua xv. 27). Others still from a remote ancestor Hasmon (Ezra ii. 19). The names of the sons of Mattathias were John, "the holy"; Simon, "the jewel"; Judas, "the hammerer"; Eleazar, "the beast-sticker"; Jonathan, "the cunning." Of these Judas, the third, has given the name to the whole family, the Maccabees. At one time the name Maccabæus was thought to be a surname added descriptive of the character. It is now thought the surnames of

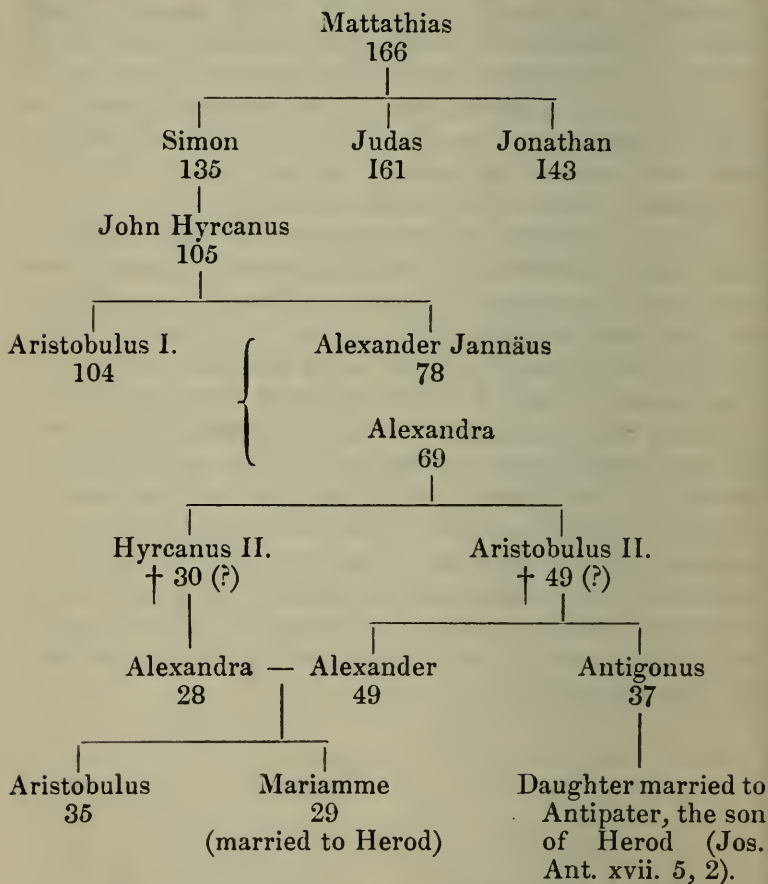
the brothers were given them at their birth, and that what were supposed to be their birth names (Judas, Simon, Jonathan, Eleazar, John) were given them officially when they became princes of the Jewish people, as in Christian times popes received names on their accession to the chair of St Peter and reigned and went down to history under them. But the whole subject is enveloped in obscurity.

What is certain and instructive is, that although the Jews preferred the title *Hasmonæan* and never employed the name *Maccabæan* either as applicable to the family of Mattathias or to the dynasty which sprung from him, in after ages the movement was appropriately named after the man who played the greatest part in it: as in the beginning of Israel's history everything was attributed to the great national leader of the Exodus, including the early annals of Jewish history, and the whole body of Jewish jurisprudence, so at this late stage in Israel's chequered career, a great captain of the people once more gives his name to the books that chronicle the movement, and to the whole epoch during which his descendants lived and reigned.



# THE AGE OF THE MACCABEES

## GENEALOGY OF THE HASMONÆANS



The above are the dates at which the rulers died according to Schürer.

## CHAPTER V

JUDAS MACCABÆUS (165-161 B.C.)

1. *The Ideal Captain.*—Judas was a born military commander, and enjoyed a career full of the chances and opportunities a soldier covets. Gifted naturally with a noble and kingly bearing, he was blessed also with a fund of gaiety and light-heartedness. His cheerful spirits were like some men's that flow ever and overflow. At a moment of dejection and weariness in the ranks, he had but to appear at the head of his soldiers, in order to bring back their courage and animate them with hope. After generations told their children strange tales of Judas's agility and valour—how like he looked to a giant when he fastened the breast-plate across his chest, and with his brawny arms swung the broad sword to right and left of him; how the shouts of his men, when he led them to victory, resembled the roar of young lions rushing on their prey; how his night marches, so surprising and mysterious, disconcerted the foe and the blast of his terrible horn was heard at incredible distances; above all how as Captain of the Lord's hosts, in an evil time, he drew to him the admiration of all men, and reared for himself a monument more enduring than brass. "For he pursued the wicked and sought them out, and burnt up those that vexed his people. Wherefore the wicked shrunk for fear

of him, and all the workers of iniquity were troubled because salvation prospered in his hand. He grieved also many kings, and made Jacob glad with his acts and his memorial is blessed for ever. Moreover he went through the cities of Judah, destroying the ungodly out of them and turning away wrath from Israel; so that he was renowned unto the utmost part of the earth and *he received unto him such as were ready to perish.*"

The last sentence of the chronicler reveals a beautiful quality in a strong man's character, viz., the gracious spirit of pity and helpfulness. Judas was known, far and wide, for his tenderness and humanity as well as for his indomitable strength and success. He who championed his country's cause, alike in civil and religious matters, and when the time required it, could cut off a traitor's head, and hang it up as a warning to others on the gates of Jerusalem, appears to have been a soft-hearted, kind man, full of the milk of charity, compassion and forbearance. We need not wonder that Judas was not only feared and honoured, but loved and revered as well. His soldiers believed that angels and other heavenly instrumentalities fought for him, side by side with themselves, so that being supernaturally aided, they overcame multitudes, greatly in excess of their number, nay even subdued fierce beasts of the wilderness, and broke down ramparts of iron (2 Macc. xi. 10, 18). Certainly never since David's time, when the Philistines received their crushing defeats, had a soldier achieved

so much with such defective means, and against such fearful odds, as did Judas Maccabæus. The struggle on which he thus entered with the poorest material for winning success, was nevertheless so fraught with honour and glory, that Jewish chroniclers handed down the narrative of it with more than ordinary fullness and detail.

2. *His Early Victories.*—During the earlier years of his leadership Judas obtained no fewer than four brilliant and decisive victories.

(1) First of all he defeated an army led by the Syrian general Apollonius in the neighbourhood of Samaria. Apollonius was the successor of Heliodorus in the nefarious work of a robber of temples. The latter lived in the time of Seleucus IV. about 187 B.C. Seleucus had inherited from his father a burden of national debt incurred in war with Rome. His counsellors directed his attention to the Temple treasures at Jerusalem. These treasures he attempted to seize, with what results we have already seen. Apollonius, then, against whom Judas for the first time tries his strength, is believed to be the same who came to Jerusalem with the purpose of robbing the Temple of its treasure. He too was as little successful as his predecessor had been. Judas put him to death, and scattered his army after capturing much precious spoil. He is said to have taken possession of the sword of Apollonius and to have fought with it in many subsequent battles.

(2) His next engagement with the enemy was at

Beth-horon. With a mere handful of men he again obtained a conspicuous victory over a large army under the Syrian commander Seron. The speech which he addressed to his little band of intrepid warriors on this occasion animated their hearts with courage. "With the God of heaven," said he, "it is all one to deliver with a great multitude or a small company. The victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host; but strength cometh from heaven. They come in much pride and iniquity to destroy us and our wives and children, and to spoil us, but we fight for our lives and our laws. Wherefore the Lord himself will overthrow them before our face; and as for you, be ye not afraid of them" (1 Macc. iii. 18-22). Having fortified their courage with these words Judas and his meagre army leaped suddenly on the enemy, pursuing them as far as the land of the Philistines and leaving 800 of them dead on the field. Judas and his guerilla band made at this time no attempt to capture the fortified city of Jerusalem. They only emerged from their rendezvous in the hills to the north-east of the city, harassed the formidable forces in hostility to them, and this done, returned to their camp among the hills. They had now, however, made themselves an object of terror to their foes, and neighbouring nations began from this time to talk about their exploits and to stand in awe of Judas.

(3) A third and now supreme effort was made by the Syrian government to break the power of the insurgents. In the same year as the affair of Beth-horon,



Antiochus divided his whole army into two parts. The one division accompanied him in an expedition to Persia, whither he set out at this time with the view of raising tribute for the replenishment of his depleted exchequer. The other he left at home under the charge of Lysias, who had been appointed regent during the king's absence. Among other instructions to the viceroy was one regarding the chastisement of the Jews. An army was immediately to be despatched to Judæa, to make a thorough clearance of the inhabitants of that turbulent land, and prepare the way for the settlement of some new people in their place. This was a large order, as we would say; but Lysias, like an obedient soldier, did his best to execute it. The army employed for the purpose consisted of 50,000 men, and was under the command of three generals, Ptolemy, Gorgias, and Nicanor. They entered Judæa from the west and had their camp at Emmaus, in the Valley of Ajalon.

The army of the insurgents pitched on the heights of Mizpeh overlooking Jerusalem. The place was fitly chosen. In olden time, God's people had been in the habit of assembling there. In the iron age of the Judges, councils of war had been held at Mizpeh (Judges xx. 1); and in the time of Samuel the seer, great conventicles had gathered there. From the hill-tops of Mizpeh the patriotic army could see the desolate city. The sight thereof fired their blood and strengthened them in their brave resolutions. "Let us restore the decayed estate of our people," said they;

“and let us fight for our people and the sanctuary.” Waiting the call to battle, they lay there on the mountain slopes and beheld Jerusalem in her defilement and desolation: few of her own children went out and in through her gates: her strongholds were occupied by aliens, her sanctuary overgrown with weeds: joy was taken from Jacob, and the pipe with the harp ceased.

Waiting there at Mizpeh on the eve of battle, within view of these soul-stirring sights, and encamped on ground that their fathers' feet had trod where God had been enquired for in times of danger in the past, the soldiers of Judas ordained a sacred fast and put sackloth on their loins: they rent their clothes and covered their heads with ashes. A copy of the Law that had escaped burning, was produced and laid open on a conspicuous place, and, standing over the sacred roll, they swore to drive the accursed heathen from God's sanctuary, or die in the attempt. To give the memorable scene greater impressiveness, they brought out priests' garments that had escaped destruction, first fruits, tithes, and such like memorials of better days, and the air rang again with their shouts: “What shall we do,” cried they, “with these and whither shall we carry them? For thy sanctuary is trodden down and profaned, and thy priests are in heaviness and brought low: and lo! the heathen are assembled together against us to destroy us: what things they imagine against us, thou knowest. How shall we be able to stand against



them, except thou, O God, be our help?" (1 Macc. iii. 50-53).

Like Cromwell's *Ironsides*, whose rule was to trust in God and keep their powder dry, Judas, while he encouraged his troops thus to supplicate the help of the Lord of hosts, took care to prepare them for battle in the most soldier-like and strategic manner. As the great Gideon, ere he fought against Midian, weeded all unfit followers from his ranks, so now did Judas. He issued a proclamation, that all who were building houses, or planting vineyards, all who were naturally timid or had betrothed themselves to wives, should be permitted to return home. His army of fighting men, which by this means was considerably reduced in number although greatly improved in quality, was now divided into four parts, led respectively by himself and his three brothers, Simon, Joseph, and Jonathan. The fifth brother, Eleazar, was made chaplain to the ranks, and the watchword and battle-cry given to the army was "the help of the Lord." They were evidently preparing for a decisive engagement with the enemy, and before entering upon it, Judas, according to his usual custom, delivered a speech to his men, now numbering 6000. He told them to fight manfully, to remember what it was they were fighting for, even for the cause of pure religion and the recovery of their sanctuary. He reminded them in whom their confidence rested, what He had done for their fathers in the time of Sennacherib, how He had slain

185,000 men. In this manner he made them bold with his words, and ready to die for their altar and hearth.

Judas was a deeply religious man, as we see. He was also a master of stratagem, and it was well that he was so, as it turned out that at that decisive moment Gorgias, one of the enemy's generals, was engaged executing a deeply-planned scheme. He had stealthily quitted the main body of the Syrian army with a contingent of picked men, numbering 1000 horse and 5000 foot, with the intention of coming down with a rush on Judas's flank. It was a clever move on the part of the Syrian general. There was only one little hitch occurred in the execution of the plan, but that proved fatal. Judas had observant watchers posted everywhere around, some of whom saw the movement and reported it to their master. When, then, Gorgias and his desperadoes came suddenly against the Jews' quarters, they found to their disgust the Israelite army fled, and nowhere to be seen. The disappointed Syrians concluded that their observant foe, having been advised about their movement in time, had hurried off to another position for safety; and so they accordingly proceeded to pursue them in the most likely direction. Not so. Judas had met stratagem with counter-stratagem. When he drew off his troops to avoid the Syrian's side attack, he wheeled them round in the direction of the encampment at Emmaus in order to open an attack on the enemy, now deprived of a general and many

of their best men. The cunning movement of Judas turned out a brilliant success. A desperate encounter followed, and the army which he commanded, although neither officered nor armed as the enemy, and fighting only in the proportion of three to seven, chased them from the field in ignominious flight. Many lay on the battlefield, and the survivors were utterly dispersed.

Nicanor, one of the three generals heading the Antiochian troops, came out of the disaster badly. This man had been so certain of success that he had brought a large number of merchants with him to Judæa to buy the captured Jews as slaves for foreign markets ! He had even gone as far as to cause a sale of captive Jews to be proclaimed beforehand throughout the towns situated on the sea-coast. The very price of male and female Jews was actually determined upon. Nicanor therefore, as we can guess, came out of the Emmaus disaster with a rather discredited reputation. It happened that the day on which the Jews obtained this glorious victory was the day preceding the Sabbath. The army, therefore, halted in their pursuit of the enemy, availed themselves of the rest of the Sabbath, which they sorely needed, and praised God in the 136th Psalm, the Jews' National Anthem, as it has been called. The day following they set about dividing the spoil that had fallen to them, giving large portions to the wounded, the orphans, and the widows.

(4) Lysias, the viceroy or regent of the Syrian king, was deeply mortified by the miserable defeat of his

troops. That so undisciplined and contemptible a foe as the Jews should put his soldiers to rout was not to be endured! Accordingly in the following year—165 B.C.—a monster army was fitted out, numbering it was said some 5000 cavalry and 60,000 infantry. Lysias placed himself at the head of this multitude and hostilities were renewed. Judas again took the field in person and brought with him on the occasion a recruited body of men numbering 10,000. The place of meeting was Beth-zur, south of Jerusalem, on the road to Hebron. The opposing armies were strangely disproportioned, in numbers and training the one was vastly superior to the other. What chance was there for Judas's small, undrilled, unaccoutred force against a multitude like the Syrians, vast, well-armed, and trained to fight? Judas felt his heart misgive and cried earnestly to heaven. "Blessed art thou, O Saviour of Israel, who didst quell the violence of the mighty man by the hand of thy servant David, and gavest the host of strangers into the hands of Jonathan the son of Saul, and his armour-bearer: shut up this army in the hand of thy people Israel and let them be confounded in their power and horsemen: make them to be of no courage and cause the boldness of their strength to fall away, and let them quake at their destruction. Cast them down with the sword of them that love thee, and let all those that know thy name praise thee with thanksgiving" (1 Macc. iv. 30-33). A fierce and bloody onset was made, both sides doing their best

to conquer. But victory once more fell to the Maccabæan hosts. Some five thousand Syrians perished at the battle of Beth-zur and the remainder were put to flight. Lysias had to confess that the contemptible army of the Jews knew better than his soldiers did how to be valiant whether in life or death.

3. *The Religious Reforms.*—The aims of Judas and his brethren had hitherto been, and for a time continued to be, exclusively religious. His speeches to the soldiers on the eve of their battles breathe the spirit of religious fervour. We are now to see what Judas was able to do for the cause of true religion. In the early years of his career the Temple worship of Jehovah was almost wholly abandoned. The altar of burnt-offering had been defiled, as we have seen, and the great majority of the faithful were scattered abroad. Seeing that Judas and his army were masters of the military situation, many thought that if ever the religious ordinances of Israel were to be restored, now was the time. This was the opinion of many earnest people. It was also that of Judas himself: "Behold our enemies are discomfited," were his words; "let us go up to cleanse and repair the sanctuary." It sorely needed cleansing and repairing. The beautiful doors were burned off their fastenings; the sacred courts were a wilderness of thorns and thistles; the rooms of the priests were levelled with the ground. No one who had seen the Temple in its beauty and perfection, could look upon its distressed condition now, and not mourn. Judas and his guards



went up to survey the scene of desolation, and when they saw it they made great lamentation and cast ashes upon their head. With rent clothes they fell to the ground and sounded an alarum with the trumpets. At length this vehement expression of grief having subsided, they set themselves to the work of restoration.

Like experienced soldiers, their first step was to guard themselves from interference from the garrison. It was deemed advisable, therefore, to set apart a small contingent for that purpose. They then took upon them to make new appointments to the priesthood, men of irreproachable lives and withal staunch supporters of God's Law. It may occur to us to think that that was assuming a prerogative which hardly belonged to soldiers. It was, however, their reverence for the rights and privileges of the priesthood that prompted them in the matter. Many duties were to be attended to connected with the removal of the heathen and the restoration of the divine altars which only worthy priests could be entrusted with. Acting under the protection of Judas and his guards, these good men then removed the old altar of burnt-offering that the heathen had (in the most hideous manner) defiled; but inasmuch as in its day it had been duly consecrated, they did not destroy it but laid up the stones in a safe place until a prophet should arise who would instruct them what to do with them. In its place they substituted a new altar; they repaired, renewed and re-



dedicated the gates, doors, courts and chambers; they furnished new vessels for the sanctuary, lighted the great candlestick, burned incense on the altar, restored the table of shewbread, and set loaves thereon, and on December 25, 165 B.C., three years to a day from the entrance of the "abomination of desolation," the Temple was once more consecrated to the service of the true God, with songs, citherns, harps, and cymbals. It was a happy historic occasion, because the reproach of the heathen was now wiped out. The hearts of believers were reanimated, and the schismatic movement, recently set on foot by Onias, received a timeous check and was just kept from creating a lasting cause of disturbance and division. A festival commemorative of the great event was appointed to be held year by year, and well it deserved to be so commemorated. We read of our Lord being present in His time at the Feast of Dedication (St John x. 22).

4. *Second Battle at Beth-zur*.—After the great event just recorded, so creditable to Judas and his followers, he began an aggressive campaign against hostile heathen tribes in the vicinity of Judæa (1 Macc. v.). Among other of his exploits at this time was the righteous chastisement administered to the Edomites for their unfriendly treatment of Israel. This work of retaliation was done so satisfactorily that men were reminded of Isaiah's prophecy (lxiii.), "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Judas also made excursions

into Lebanon and Damascus, bringing succour to his countrymen scattered in these remote parts, on whom the oppression of the heathen had weighed heavily. During this period of knight-chivalry in Judas's splendid career, we hear of more than one weak and defenceless tribe applying to him for aid against their enemies. Judas, we can imagine, was ever forward to draw his sword in such causes as became one who "received those that were ready to perish."

Somewhere about 162 B.C., Lysias again invaded Judæa and this time besieged Beth-zur. He brought an immense multitude of troops with him—the Jewish chroniclers say 100,000—including many mercenaries from foreign lands. A new and formidable element in the battle was a troop of elephants—numbering thirty-two—trained to fight. The monsters were distributed over the cavalcade at equal distances, and a company of 500 horse and twice as many foot surrounded each elephant, clad with coats of mail and having on their heads helmets of brass. The huge animals appeared like mountains amid the forests of men and horses. Each of the elephants carried on its back a wooden erection in the shape of a tower. The towers were crammed with soldiers. The brave Judas confronted this terrible array of men and monsters in Bethzacharias, a place in the neighbourhood of Beth-zur, and for the first time in his military career suffered a defeat. It was no discredit to him, nor was he beaten without the performance of at

least one singular achievement. Eleazar, the brother of Judas, perceiving one of the elephants to stand out taller and more formidable than the rest, and clothed with royal harness, and naturally, though mistakenly, supposing that it carried the king, rushed on the beast through the battle, hewing down men on the right hand and the left, in order to clear a passage. Advancing to it he crept under the monster, and thrust him through with a spear. The animal fell down on Eleazar, and crushed him to death.

Beth-zur, still besieged, happened to be badly provisioned, and was unable to hold out longer; nor were the defeated insurgents in a position to relieve the besieged city. It was the most critical moment in the history of the Maccabæan struggle. But deliverance came in a wonderful manner. Lysias was suddenly called home on account of a rival having providentially appeared on the scene, who threatened him with the loss of his regency. He was obliged, therefore, to retire from the field and make terms with his gallant enemy. These were on the whole favourable to the defeated party. It was agreed that political subjection and religious freedom should be maintained. The situation which existed prior to the invasion of Antiochus IV. was restored. Schürer says: "The understanding with the Jews at which Lysias and Antiochus V. in their own interests now arrived was not interfered with by any of the following kings. None of them resorted again to the foolish attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes, forcibly to introduce pagan

culture and ceremonies among the Jews. The Jewish worship which had been restored by Judas Maccabæus, amid all the changeful circumstances of the age, continued to be observed in essentially the same way. This deserves to be specially noted in order that a correct estimate may be formed of the conflicts which followed. The end aimed at in the struggle was now different from that previously before them. It had to do no longer with the preservation of religion, but, just as we have already seen in the preliminary history of the Maccabæan revolt, with the question whether the friends of the Greeks or the national party within the Jewish nation itself should have the supremacy. It was essentially a Jewish internecine war, in which the Syrian superiors took part only in so far as they supported and put at the head of the provincial government<sup>t</sup>, sometimes the one, sometimes the other of their two Jewish parties. To a certain extent indeed religious interests did come into consideration. For the Greek party were inclined to go farther in the way of favouring Greek institutions, while their nationalist opponents seemed more attached to the religion of Israel. But the fundamental points were no longer in dispute" (i. 225.).

5. *Judas aims at Political Independence.*—Everything of a religious kind that was contended for having been obtained through the exertions of the national party, many held the view that Judas and his brethren should now lay down arms and study the arts of peace. This was the decided opinion of the Hasidæans ("pious

ones"), an influential section of Judas's supporters, who had identified themselves with the Maccabæan party on purely religious grounds. The Hasidæans were the precursors of the Pharisees, and set their face determinedly against prolonging the quarrel with their rulers, now that the policy of thrusting heathenism upon the Jews had been abandoned. Judas, along with the majority of his followers, took quite another view. They had, through God's help, obtained religious liberty; might it not be His will to give them political independence also? Besides, what likelihood was there of their being able to maintain religious liberty, while they were politically slaves? Not only this, but so long as the appointment of the high-priest was in the hands of the Syrian sovereign, and he capable of abusing his power by the appointment of unworthy persons like Alcimus, how could they live in peace and contentment with their rulers?

The Scribes and Hasidæans, on the other hand, were quite satisfied with such persons, and willing to yield due obedience and respect to them. The worship of Jehovah was not now interfered with, and that was a consummation well worth fighting for; but to enter on a struggle for civil independence was not to be thought of. The one struggle was right, because God's honour and glory were in danger; the other would be wrong, as it involved only worldly interests, and appealed only to worldly men. The Hasidæan party was evidently not supported by all the citizens of Jerusalem, as we find that the authorities had to



call in the military before they could get the unworthy Alcimus installed into office; moreover, as soon as the military withdrew their presence from the city, the high-priest found himself totally unable to assert his authority, and he also was compelled to withdraw from the city. However the Scribes and Hasidæans might have tolerated him, the masses were not so pliable, especially when they learned how insufferably he was abusing his authority, and interfering with the laws and worship of the people.

When Alcimus found it impossible to live in Jerusalem, it was a signal to the Syrian army to visit Judæa once more. Nicanor the famous general came under orders from Demetrius I. to break the power of Judas and his malignants. In 161 B.C. the two celebrated captains met and fought it out between Beth-horon and Adasa. The battle ended in a triumphant victory for Judas. The army of Nicanor was scattered and the general himself slain. An interesting and eventful meeting of these two distinguished soldiers is said to have taken place in Jerusalem previous to this decisive battle. The late Dean Stanley compared the meeting of Nicanor and Judas on that occasion to the meeting of Claverhouse with Morton. Stanley's graphic description of the scene, although based on the fabulous account given in 2 Macc. xiv., which is totally inconsistent with the historical representation of 1 Macc. vii., may here be quoted. "They sat side by side on chairs of state, like the curule seats of the Roman magistrates. The Syrian general



was completely fascinated. He could not bear to have Judas out of his sight—‘he loved the man from his heart.’ He entered into his future plans. He entreated him to lay aside this wandering course, to have a wife and children of his own. He held out the picture of marriage and a quiet and settled home. The high-priest’s office was apparently suggested as the haven of the warrior’s stormy career. If we may trust the brief sentence which follows, Judas accepted the advice so cordially, that the long-delayed event took place—that he married, and for a time settled quietly and happily in domestic life. Suddenly all was changed. The jealous rival Alcimus saw in this friendship the ruin of his own hopes, denounced Nicanor to the king, and procured an order that Judas should be sent as prisoner to Antioch. . . . The two friends parted to meet no more.”

6. *Death of Judas Maccabæus* (161 B.C.)—The Syrians were irrepressible foes. Two months had but elapsed since the fall of Nicanor near Beth-horon, when Demetrius the king despatched a force of extraordinary magnitude to crush the Maccabæan insurgents. Judas again led his humble but intrepid troops to battle, but it was the last time he did so. The Syrians were commanded by Bacchides, who had received orders to revenge the death of Nicanor. The insurgent army numbered 3000 and were encamped at Elasa. A spirit of fear and cowardice infected them, a new and unheard-of calamity in their experience. Most likely the fearful odds against which

they were called to contend had spread a feeling of frenzy amongst them; however the panic is to be accounted for, the result was that all save 800 faithful men deserted their leader. Even these caught the general scare, for though they clung to their post they counselled flight. "God forbid," said Judas, "that I should do this thing and flee away from them; if our time be come let us die manfully for our brethren and let us not leave behind a stain upon our honour." Having thus spoken, Judas advanced on the enemy's right wing, broke their ranks in pieces and pursued them as far as Azotus. The left wing then took up the chase of the pursuers. The latter, perceiving this, wheeled round and fought a desperate battle with their Syrian foe. The hand-to-hand fight lasted through a whole day, from morning till evening. On both sides the slain were numerous, and among them was the lion-hearted Judas. Such was the fate of this soldier genius. When his brethren laid him in the ancestral tomb at Modin, all Israel made lamentation and mourned for him many days. Their words were: "How is the valiant man fallen that delivered Israel."

7. *Character and Achievements of Judas.* — Judas Maccabæus is justly reckoned one of the great military commanders of the world. Fearless of heart, in decision rapid, determined and bold, of untiring energy, in movement ubiquitous and full of surprise, careless of his own safety and unsparing of his soldiers' comfort, yet the personal friend of every man in the

ranks, when he stood at the head of his army his appearance worked upon them like a magic spell. Out of what poor undisciplined material he constructed his famous army we have seen; but being hillsmen reared in the uplands of Judæa, far from the contaminating influences of city life, untainted by the insolent spirit of mercenary troops, and uncompromising in their zeal for the principles of the Law, it is not to be wondered at, that in a short time and under the direction of the Maccabæan family of heroes, the small insurgent army should become a terror to the Syrian legions and that in the words of the old Law-giver, five of them should chase a hundred, and an hundred of them put ten thousand to flight.

It is remarkable, too, how frequently luck, or rather we should say Divine Providence, favours a brave man like Judas and smiles upon the fortunes of his devoted band. Again and again doors of deliverance opened before the Jewish hero and by unexpected hands he and his cause were extricated from difficulties most insuperable. Again and again, as at the fatal engagement at Beth Zacharias, some conspiracy or jealousy in the camp, or some intrigue or rupture at the court, happened at the opportune moment, whereupon the danger that threatened to annihilate the nationalist army was turned aside, a welcome respite was afforded them which they were not slow to turn to their advantage, and terms actually offered them more favourable than they could have expected.

Readers of Josephus and *the Books of the Maccabees* are often inclined to think that in reporting these successes obtained at this period of their history on the battlefield, the Jewish historians have fallen into the usual habit of exaggeration. The victories ascribed to Judas and his small untrained band of soldiers over the gigantic hosts of Syrian trained warriors are so marvellous, that it is perhaps natural to call in question the veracity of the narrators. But it should be borne in mind that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Once and again it has happened, in the history of campaigns, that a small party of determined fighters have held out longer than an enormous troop of mercenary soldiers. Especially has this been so, when as in the case of the Maccabæan army the men were patriots fighting in defence of altar and hearth, and when in addition to a large endowment of natural strength and courage, they possessed the invincible determination and fortitude of those who are enkindled with the inspiring flame of religious enthusiasm.

Judas rendered a service to the cause of religion and humanity in his time that it is impossible to overestimate. But for his bold intervention at this crisis in national affairs, Judæa would have been overspread with the blight of heathen practice and worship, the cause and the people of Jehovah most likely extirpated from the land, and the advent of the gospel frustrated or delayed. As it was, many unprincipled Jews were won to the side of Hellenism. Impelled

by fear or attracted by worldly considerations, they unscrupulously conformed to the will of their oppressors, lightly adopted pagan habits of life, became ashamed of those idiosyncracies in which their fathers gloried, and made themselves traitors to the law, their country, and their God. To Judas belongs the distinguishing glory of having rescued the holy city from *the Abomination of Desolation*, turned back the tide of pagan aggressiveness, restored Israel to the practice of her divine vocation, and prepared the world for the coming of the Son of Man.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SUCCESSORS OF JUDAS

#### 1. *Jonathan* (161-143 B.C.)

1. *A Ragged Regiment*.—With the death of Judas, the cause of patriotism appeared hopelessly lost. On the eve of his last battle, as we have seen, the most of his troops had deserted, and of those who nobly adhered to their leader the greater number had fallen on the field. It afterwards transpired that the Macabæan cause had many more supporters at this time than was thought; but at the moment ruin seemed inevitable. Large numbers went over to the winning side as might have been expected, and others were subjected to great loss and violence for remaining true



to their convictions. To add to the trouble a famine now raged throughout the land, and reduced the people to a state of misery and feebleness.

It was on all hands, therefore, an unpropitious time when Jonathan succeeded to the leadership which had been held by his illustrious brother Judas. For a time he and his broken regiment concealed themselves in the wilderness solitudes of Tekoah. They were more like a guilty gang of freebooters than the successors of men who had harassed the Syrian legions. Jonathan was the hearty and unanimous choice of the party. "Since thy brother Judas died," they said, "we have no man like him to go forth against our enemies and Bacchides and against them of our nation that are adversaries to us. Now therefore we have chosen thee this day to be our prince and captain in his stead, that thou mayest fight our battles" (1 Macc. ix. 29-30). The choice, as we shall have occasion to see, was a wise one. Jonathan long before had given proof of his soldierly qualities. In all the battles of his brethren in past years he had fought side by side with them, and in him as in them the fire of patriotism burned bright.

2. *Jonathan's Success.*—The high-priest at this time was Alcimus. He, as we saw, was so disliked that before he could be installed into office the arm of the law had to interpose. All through his inglorious reign he required the help of that arm. Bacchides, the military governor of the city, was the officer who was responsible for the protection of the high-priest. He



seems to have been a wise man, who consulted the things that made for peace, both in the interest of the high-priest and in that of the public weal. In consequence, we hear of little trouble among the Jews for a considerable time. In 159 B.C. Alcimus died and the high-priesthood became vacant. The government were tired of the task of affording it military protection, and allowed the vacancy to continue for seven years. We next hear of Jonathan and his brother Simon having a scuffle with Bacchides on the edge of the wilderness and gaining a decisive victory over him. Jonathan was able to bring Bacchides to his knees and extort advantageous terms from him. This was the first piece of good fortune that fell to Jonathan, and it had the effect of putting the affairs of the Maccabæan party on a better footing than they had been since the days of Judas.

Jonathan hid no more in desert places, but came forth into the light and observation of the world. We hear of him dispensing justice at Michmash, and cleansing the country of ungodly Hellenisers. His star was now (158 B.C.) in the ascendant, and that this was the case was due to three circumstances—(1) his own great capacity as a military and political leader; (2) the essential soundness and righteousness of the cause for which he contended; (3) the totally disorganised condition of the Hellenisers since the death of Alcimus.

3. *Jonathan becomes High-Priest* (153 B.C.). — The cause of religion and patriotism in Jerusalem and Judæa benefited by a political crisis at the court of the Syrian

king. That was a contention for the throne on the part of two men, Demetrius I. and Alexander Balas. The latter won the day, and his unsuccessful rival, who still formed the head of an influential faction in the state, began, for his own ends, to humour the enemies of Syria. Jonathan came in for a considerable share of the favours, among other honours receiving permission to surround himself with an armed force. Thereafter he took up his abode in Jerusalem and fortified the Temple Hill. About the same time also it happened that all the Syrian garrisons were withdrawn from Judæa except at two places of importance, Acra and Beth-zur. The chances of the national party were bidding fair to be triumphant. Nor was the tide of returning prosperity yet at the full. Alexander, the king, having heard of Demetrius opening up terms of friendship with the insurgent Jews, and fearing that they might be persuaded to help him in his frustrated ambitions, determined to cultivate their goodwill also. He conferred high and unexpected honours upon Jonathan, presented him with crown and purple robe, gave him the title of "King's Friend," and appointed him to the vacant office of high-priest. The son of Mattathias was overwhelmed with royal favours, and seemed in danger of being spoiled by them. For when in 153 B.C., at the Feast of Tabernacles, he appeared for the first time in the resplendent attire of the pontifical office, the blue robes with tinkling bells, the long golden sash, the high blue turban, the gold plate affixed thereto

with the inscription "Holiness to Jehovah," there must have been some good men with their suspicions that this son of Mattathias was ambitious of worldly distinction beyond what it behoved a patriot to be. Yet probably they would have been doing their leader wrong by such a judgment. Jonathan, up to the last, worked hard for the emancipation of his nation, and if he valued honours for their own sake, he also valued them for the opportunities they afforded him of furthering the cause which he and his brethren had at heart.

4. *Friendly relations with Demetrius II.*—It was an ambition of Jonathan's to take possession of the Tower of Jerusalem in behalf of the patriotic party; and more than this, he supposed himself able to achieve his purpose. With this in view he constructed many war engines and laid siege to the fortress. When tidings of Jonathan's schemes reached the Syrian palace, the king, Demetrius II., was filled with rage. He was new to the throne, did not know the Jewish high-priest, as he learned to do afterwards, and at first pronounced his action insolently defiant: and as Jonathan held his appointment from, and was answerable to the crown, it was natural that he should be summoned to appear before the offended king at Ptolemais to answer for his conduct. Jonathan promptly obeyed the summons, and was clever enough to turn the curses intended for him into blessings. Taking with him such gifts as were always acceptable to an Oriental potentate, in silver, gold, and rich raiment, he stood before Demetrius to answer the

charge of treason. Jonathan had the command of such suave and conciliatory speech that this, together with the gifts, charmed Demetrius, and instead of meeting as enemies these two men at once became friends. Jonathan explained matters quite satisfactorily and took his departure, bearing with him many tokens of personal favour, and better than these, a confirmation in his office of high-priest. Best of all, the king granted him a letter, at his request, declaring the land of Judæa and the country of Samaria free from tribute. In the letter the king spoke of himself as a friend of the Jews, and in return for their goodwill toward him discharged them from payment of all tithes and customs, from all crown taxes on salt pits, and so forth. He further declared that of such exemptions nothing should ever be revoked. Thus far all had ended well, and the popular high-priest returned home, a happy and highly-honoured man.

The best of relations continued for a time between the two men, and Jonathan was able to render an important service to the king at a crisis in his imperial affairs. An alarming revolt had broken out against Demetrius in his capital at Antioch. Jonathan sent at his request a detachment of 3000 picked men to help him to quell the insurrection. They came most opportunely to the relief of the Syrian monarch. The insurrectionists had swelled to the number of 120,000 and were even proposing to take the king's life. As soon as the Jewish army arrived

on the scene, the king called to them for help. They at once obeyed by dispersing themselves in various directions through the city, and in a single day rid the king of several thousands of his rebels. It is strange to read of such friendly dealings between the Jews and their oppressors. But the Syrian monarchs at this time sat so insecurely on their throne that a shrewd man like the high-priest knew how to turn the fact to his nation's advantage.

5. *Imprisonment and Death of Jonathan* (143 B.C.).—The son of Alexander Balas was a minor and his guardian was one Trypho, an astute but self-seeking man. He caused the boy to be proclaimed king under the title Antiochus VI. This was in 145 B.C. while Demetrius, the reigning sovereign, still lived. Acts of treason were, as we have seen, quite common at the Syrian Court. Jonathan's part in the affair was not worthy of the name he bore. He had received from Demetrius all that that insecure monarch could give him, and now gracelessly went over to the side of Antiochus VI. It was a most detestable act of perfidy, but he paid dearly and deservedly for it. Jonathan's new master confirmed him in all his dignities and further enriched him with many gifts. He on his part undertook to expel all soldiers and supporters of Demetrius from the regions of Southern Syria, and claim possession of all territory in such parts, in name of the pretender Antiochus VI. Jonathan, in company with his brother Simon, proceeded to fulfil his promise. He was a clever man and could, as a rule, see



through people, but Trypho was one who deceived him. That wily diplomatist had been all the time working for his own hand, and plotting to place the crown on his own head. Jonathan did not perceive his duplicity and was far too actively interested in the young pretender's fortunes to suit Trypho's plans. Having resolved that he must be got rid of, Trypho had him decoyed to Ptolemais and shut up in a dungeon. Without much loss of time, by orders of the arch-traitor, Jonathan was put to death.

6. *His Character and Influence.*—Jonathan's *sobriquet* was "Apphus," "the wary," "the cunning one"; and as we have just had occasion to see, the nickname suited some of his ways and tactics very well. The stricter people of the time—the Scribes and Hasidæans—had dissociated themselves from the later policy of the Maccabæan party, in the belief that the leader was working not for the honour of God but for the exaltation of himself and his family. Religious liberty satisfied them, even if enjoyed under a foreign oppressor. The Scribes and Hasidæans suspected that the Maccabæan family had their eye on sovereignty itself, and a Jewish monarchy, at that period of the national history, would, in their opinion, frustrate the realisation of Israel's peculiar function among the nations of the world, as a pious people who bore witness to the authority and righteous government of Jehovah. A new royal house seated on the throne of David would elevate political vain glory so high, that Israel's essential occupation of worship and the study of the Law



would sink into neglect. Such was the view of the Jewish pietists, and more and more did the common people come round to them.

The masses saw more clearly than the upper classes did how the true glory of Judaism was threatened—the glory which consisted not in pseudo-patriotism, but in the knowledge of the Eternal. The party of the Scribes or Pharisees began from this time to separate themselves from the Hasmonæan or Sadducean party, and as time wore on the separation became more and more marked. Jonathan, it must be admitted, acted a quite consistent part in his furtherance of the cause of national freedom. He did not approve of meekly sitting down under a strange yoke as the Scribes did, still less of defending the humiliating servitude in the interests of religion. Jonathan, for his part, believed in war, in politics, in state craft, and that presumably in the interests of the religion itself. He believed, moreover, in a spirited foreign policy, as we would say, and he despatched embassies with letters to the great governments of Rome and Sparta. His was a strong, aggressive, pushful nature. He neither feared foe nor shirked difficulty. At the commencement of his career he found his party unable to show its face in public, so feeble and discredited was it at that time. Before his death he had lifted them to a position of power and mastery. Judas, after he had succeeded in restoring national worship to its proper place, bequeathed to his successor the task of completing the work, by winning for the people national independence.

Jonathan accomplished much in this direction. The Hellenist party were driven from power and he himself made high-priest. It was left to his successor, Simon, to carry the work one step further, viz., to secure the liberation of the Jews from subjection to the Syrian suzerainty.

## 2. *Simon* (142-135 B.C.)

1. *Simon's Filial Piety*.—Mattathias, the father of Judas and his brethren, was said to have bestowed a farewell blessing on his sons, and to have singled out Simon as a man of good counsel, who would be to the others as a father, and to whom they were to give good heed. Accordingly, he has been called by some the Solomon of the period, because he gave the national rising the stamp of wisdom and stability, while Jonathan has been called the Joab, and Judas the David, of the movement. However much or little may be in these comparisons, it is worthy of remark that the first public act of Simon—whose qualities Mattathias rated so high—was one creditable to his filial and fraternal piety, viz., the erection of a monument on his father's and brethren's sepulchre at Modin. The memorial was one of massive proportion, visible to mariners a long distance out at sea. It took the form of a series of pyramids, two for his father and mother, four for his brothers, and one for himself. Surrounding the pyramids was a number of great pillars, and on them

were sculptured many appropriate devices, such as war weapons, battle trophies, coats of armour, and miniature ships. In the early days of the struggle, during the captaincy of Judas, Simon, like the other brothers, performed the part of a loyal coadjutor, and on several occasions was entrusted with positions of supreme command. More recently, in Jonathan's reign, he had so far obtained the confidence of Antiochus VI. that he received from that monarch an appointment to the captaincy over the large district extending from the Ladder of Tyre to the border of Egypt.

2. *His Principal Services.*—Simon, like his successors, not only managed to retain what those who went before him had won, but, through statesmanlike force and the disunited government of the Antiochian rule, succeeded in improving and extending it. One important result achieved during his reign was the formal conclusion of the peace with Demetrius II., which practically meant the removal of the Syrian yoke, the liberation of the land from tribute, and the declaration of the independence of Judæa. Another achievement of Simon's brilliant reign was the expulsion of the Syrian garrison from Acra, the Tower of Jerusalem. Of all the insolences to which the Jews had been hitherto subjected, this fort of armed men frowning down upon their city, mocking the joy of their feasts, and hurling looks of defiance at the ministers of the sanctuary, was the most galling. For twenty-six years, ever since the start

of the Maccabæan struggle, the tower had been a standing menace to the hearts of the faithful. Thanks to the influence and energy of Simon, the offence was now removed, and memorable was the day in 142 B.C. when a national garrison entered into possession of the hated place, and the garrison of strangers took their leave. Prior to formal entry being made, the apartments were thoroughly cleansed from the pollutions of heathen occupation. This pious duty having been accomplished, the inhabitants entered the tower bearing branches of palm, with the music of viol and harp, songs of triumph and thanksgiving, and the joyous clash of cymbals.

3. *Honours Bestowed on Simon.*—A solemn assembly of the people was held in Jerusalem in 141 B.C., at which Simon was confirmed in the double post of governor of the city and high priest of the Temple, and at which both offices were made hereditary. From that eventful convocation dates the establishment of the Hasmonæan dynasty. Practically hereditary before, the hereditary character of the high priesthood was at that time legitimised and pronounced hereditary in the Maccabæan family. One glory of Simon's high priesthood was its confirmation by the people themselves. In the case of Jonathan, the appointment had not been conferred and confirmed by a free people, but by the representatives of a foreign despotism. The document, written in brazen tablets, in which a national assembly embodied their thanks to Simon, confirmed him in his un-

precedented honours, and extolled his conspicuous services, was ordered to be set up in a prominent place in the Sanctuary. Copies were also ordered to be deposited in the treasury, for Simon's own possession, and that of his sons after him.

Simon appears to have been a man who lived in great magnificence, and loved honour as well as deserved it. We read of a high officer of the Syrian king, who had come to Jerusalem in 139 B.C. on public business, being astonished as "he saw the glory of Simon, and the cupboard of gold and silver plate, and his great attendance." It was in his time also that the first Jewish coins were struck, an interesting proof of the advances that were being made towards national independence. The writer of the first book of the Maccabees—a reliable authority—draws a picture of Simon's days, in which there is spread out every detail of a truly ideal state. "Then," he says, "did they till their ground in peace, and the earth gave her increase, and the trees of the field their fruit. The ancient men sat all in the streets, communing together of good things, and the young men put on glorious and warlike apparel. He provided victuals for the cities, and set in them all manner of munition, so that his honourable name was renowned unto the end of the world. He made peace in the land, and Israel rejoiced with great joy: for every man sat under his vine and his fig tree, and there was none to make them afraid: neither was there any left in the land to fight against them: yea, the kings



themselves were overthrown in those days. Moreover he strengthened all those of his people that were brought low; the law he searched out; and every contemner of the law and wicked person he took away. He beautified the sanctuary and multiplied the vessels of the Temple" (1 Macc. xiv. 8-15).

4. *Substantial Recognition by Roman Senate*, 139 B.C. —Closer each year drew the relations of Rome and Judæa. Advances had been made in former times, both by Judas and Jonathan, to secure the interest of the imperial mistress of the world in the Jews, in Judas's case with less, in Jonathan's with more assurance of success. Simon's influence with the Roman Senate surpassed that of both his predecessors. In his reign Rome honoured Judæa by sending friendly remonstrances to other governments on their behalf. Numenius, their ambassador to Rome, returned with letters addressed to Ptolemy, Demetrius, Attalus, and to many lesser potentates in the East, bearing instructions that they must do the Jews no injury nor fight against them or their cities or countries, nor yet aid their enemies against them. The instructions from Rome further bore that should there be any pestilent Jews who had fled from and sought asylum in the land of these rulers they should deliver them over unto Simon, the high priest, that they might be punished according to their own law. It must be stated that the Jews, in order to induce the Senate to confer such proofs of friendship upon them, had forwarded to Rome a



costly gift in the form of a shield of gold weighing a thousand pounds.

5. *Death of Simon*, 135 B.C.—Simon had for son-in-law one Ptolemy, a rich man who dwelt near Jericho, in his castle of Dok. Ptolemy was a madly ambitious person, who saw that Simon and his sons stood between him and the high positions to which he aspired. Now it happened that these awkward relatives fell into his unscrupulous hands quite easily. Simon, along with his sons, Mattathias and Judas, had gone on a tour of inspection to the principal cities of Judæa, and had arrived in the neighbourhood of Jericho. Ptolemy, therefore, plotted a diabolical conspiracy for securing his ends. He prepared a splendid banquet in honour of his wife's relatives; and in a recess in the dining-hall had several hired assassins concealed, ready at a given signal to execute his will. During the feast Simon and his sons were persuaded by their heartless host to drink more wine than they ought to have done. In the middle of the carousal, Ptolemy and his conspirators fell upon the guests and slew the three men, together with certain of their servants. It was surely a most humiliating end for one like Simon to come by, after having wrought so well to bring peace and prosperity to his country. The wicked Ptolemy, however, realised none of his vaulting ambitions. Simon's third son, John Hyrcanus, was too alert for him, and won the support of the people of Jerusalem before he had time to do it. John continued

for many a year in the post which his father had filled so honourably. It has been said that Simon's violent and untimely end was a kind of presage of the tragic fate that was in store for almost all the Maccabæan rulers.

### 3. *John Hyrcanus* (135-105 B.C.)

1. *His Character and Reign.*—That capacity for and love of rule which characterises the Maccabæan family in general was inherited in full measure by John Hyrcanus, Simon's surviving son and successor. As a young man he had shown courage and the talent for government; and the father, perceiving these qualities in his son, had put him in charge of the fortress of Gazara. Later, in 139 B.C., he made a proud name for himself in an encounter with the warrior Cendebæus. That famous Syrian general had invaded Judæa, slaying and capturing numbers of the inhabitants. John met him with an army in a plain through which ran a deep stream that separated the contending hosts. At first the Maccabæan soldiers hesitated, and were afraid to cross the stream in order to begin the attack. John saw his men's want of pluck, and might have remonstrated with them for their cowardice. He was better advised. Instead of scolding his army he boldly plunged into the stream himself, and began to swim across as a matter of course. It is said his men immediately took heart and followed their leader. All safely landed on the enemy's side of the water.

John divided his army, and set the horsemen in midst of the footmen. The trumpets then sounded, and such a furious onslaught was made on Cendebæus and his host, that they seized the first opportunity that presented to take to flight, and were driven by their pursuers as far as Kidron, a town in Philistia.

John never forgot what Ptolemy had done to his father and brothers, and thirsted to avenge their deaths. But this was not accomplished, for a reason given by Josephus. The mother and younger brothers of John were shut up with Ptolemy in a fortress near Jericho. Accordingly when John approached the place to attack it, Ptolemy would bring the mother and her sons upon the wall, and call aloud that he would throw them down headlong unless John left off assaulting the fortress. John was thereby unnerved, and Ptolemy escaped the sword and fled to Asia Minor.

Early in his reign, the Syrians, under their King Antiochus VII. Sidetes, laid siege to Jerusalem and humbled it. As Bevan puts it, "Seven camps hemmed it in, the pinch of famine was soon felt, and Hyrcanus was embarrassed by the great population of non-combatants. He tried to expel them, but they were not allowed to pass the besieger's lines, so that they wandered starving under the walls of the city." Then came a sacred season—the Feast of Tabernacles—and Hyrcanus felt compelled to receive the miserable people back. Antiochus acted at this time with real magnanimity, granting a truce during the season of

religious solemnity, and even sending a gift of victims and incense to the Temple. Terms, on the whole favourable to the Jews, brought the siege to an end: and in a short time the energetic Maccabæan had the walls of his city repaired after the injuries inflicted on them by the besiegers.

The period during which John Hyrcanus reigned was notable in many ways. The territories of the Jews in the East were greatly extended. Mercenary troops were employed for the first time under Maccabæan rule. The high-priest began now to have his name inscribed on the coins of the country. Another remarkable departure at this time was the secession of the Hasmonæan family from the party of the Pharisees. As the descendants of the old Hasidæan pietists, who were, on religious grounds, as we saw, firm supporters of the Maccabæan struggle, the Pharisees and the family of John Hyrcanus had been on the most friendly footing. But John at last broke away from them and declared himself a Sadducee. The Sadducees were for long a strong political force, and numbered among their followers most of the Aristocratic families of Judæa; but the Pharisaic party, abjuring the worldly and Hellenising spirit of their rivals, grew in power and popularity, from this time onward till the days of Christ.

John died in 105 B.C., and oddly enough was the only member of his family who escaped a violent death. He left behind him three sons, Hyrcanus, Judas, and Mattathias, better known to the world

under their Greek names, Aristobulus, Antigonus, and Jannæus, a fact significant of the spread of Hellenism. Although for no length of time exempt from bitter wasteful strife, John's long reign of thirty years was on the whole prosperous.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME RESULTS OF THE STRUGGLE

IT now remains to sum up the more important permanent results of the Maccabæan era.

1. The age of the Maccabees marks an advance in the fuller expression of the belief in *immortality*. In the Old Testament writings the idea of immortality is largely latent, and it usually emerges through reflection on the experience of fellowship with God. Communion with God, here and now enjoyed, cannot be an experience destructible even by death. As a doctrine or integral element in a Jew's creed, the hope of immortality was necessarily of somewhat late growth. The thought of the theocratic kingdom dominated men's minds. The nation's destiny was everything with them: the fate of the individual was of secondary account. But when national disintegration came, and with it the loss of kingship and independence, the national hope and the belief in a glorious and unending destiny for the nation



was immediately turned to dust. What was their hope, as a nation, but an idle dream? Then, however, it was that the individual emerged from the nation's ashes. Amid the wreck of kingdoms and the crash of dynasties, the individual remained, and was of more value than policies or states. His individual life appeared as a thing of priceless worth. He was immortal. Clear and beautiful expression is given to the thought of human immortality in such writings belonging to the first century B.C. as *The Wisdom of Solomon* (ii. 23; iii. 1-4; iv. 13, etc.).

Further, the idea of *bodily resurrection* receives, at this period of Jewish history, its first clear expression. In the *Second Book of the Maccabees*, the mother of the martyred sons declares her conviction that she shall meet them all again at the resurrection. In the testimonies of the sons themselves, we find that they also believe in a resurrection, but only for righteous men. In another part of the same book (xii. 43) Judas Maccabæus is represented as collecting a large sum of money to send to Jerusalem for a sin-offering, to atone for some of his countrymen who had died in their sins. "If he had not hoped," the passage says, "that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead." We see then that during the Maccabæan period, and largely in consequence of the decline of national hope, the hope of immortality and resurrection came to the front, and thus prepared the soil in some measure for the fuller teaching of Jesus Christ.



2. The age of the Maccabees was rich also in *national literature*. Several of the canonical Psalms (44: 74: 79: 83), the earliest parts of the Book of Enoch, Judith, the first and second books of the Maccabees, and probably Daniel, are the principal contributions of the time. The two books of the Maccabees claim some attention here. The first book was composed in the first or second decade of the first century B.C., in the Hebrew tongue and by a Palestinian Jew. It chronicles the events of forty years of Jewish history, from the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes in 175 B.C. to the death of Simon in 135 B.C. It possesses great historical value. The writer, while a warm adherent of the Hasmonæan family, and probably a personal friend of one of the leaders in the struggle, is singularly free from the leanings of a partisan. Writing in the second generation after the events which he chronicles, he is accurate and reliable, and resembles a canonical writer, in so far as he avoids remarks and reflections on the events which he records. Another feature of his work is the absence of miraculous reports. The wonderful deliverances he records he attributes to the power of God working through human means and agencies.

The second book covers the shorter period of fourteen years, from the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes to the death of Nicanor (161 B.C.). Originally written in the Greek tongue, and probably in the city of Alexandria, about the middle of the first century B.C., it is historically a less reliable document than the other. Yet it has a value of its own. Not aiming

so much at historical exactness as at popular edification, it forms a useful commentary on the first book. Written for the instruction of Greek readers, it lays great stress on the fact that the Jews were God's highly favoured people. The writer shows that their national calamities were due to the divine judgment for national sin, especially for the sins of their own high priests. The miraculous element is conspicuously present here. When the high priests are faithful men like Simon, God is represented as interposing on their behalf by means of a supernatural apparition in which we see the desecrators of the temple scourged by supernatural agents. It is noteworthy that in this book Jehovah is impressively represented as a prayer-hearing God who draws near to men when they approach Him in a repentant spirit. Again, the thought of a life to come lights up the sorrows of God's martyred servants. Once more, the principle of retributive judgment acting here and now is repeatedly illustrated.

3. Viewing the struggle as a whole, we see that it represented *patriotism* of the purest kind, especially in its earlier days. The patriotism of the Jew has never lacked sources of inspiration. The institutions of Judaism, the holy scriptures, the ordinances of worship, the sanctuary at Jerusalem, have made him the most ardent patriot. Nor is it only for noble instances of patriotism that we turn to the Maccabæan story; it was productive of patriotic sentiment also which still stirs the heart. "We fight for our lives and our laws."

“The jeopardising of a gallant soldier is to the end that he might deliver his people and win himself a perpetual name.” “Let us die manfully for our brethren and not stain our honour.” “I will show myself such as mine old age requireth, and leave a notable example to such as be going to die courageously for the honourable and holy laws.”

Maccabæan patriotism, although ultimately victorious, had a terrible struggle to begin with. It reminds us of Saul's encounters with the Philistines. In both cases the party ranged on the side of Jehovah were less than one-fourth the number of the enemy, and miserably equipped. But they had advantages. They had a hill country to fight in, where the proud chariots and horsemen of the enemy were worse than useless. The hills that proved the undoing of their foes, inspired them with invincible courage. Among these hills were their homes, their vineyards, the dust of their ancestors. They had

“The strength that fills  
The freeman battling for his hills.”

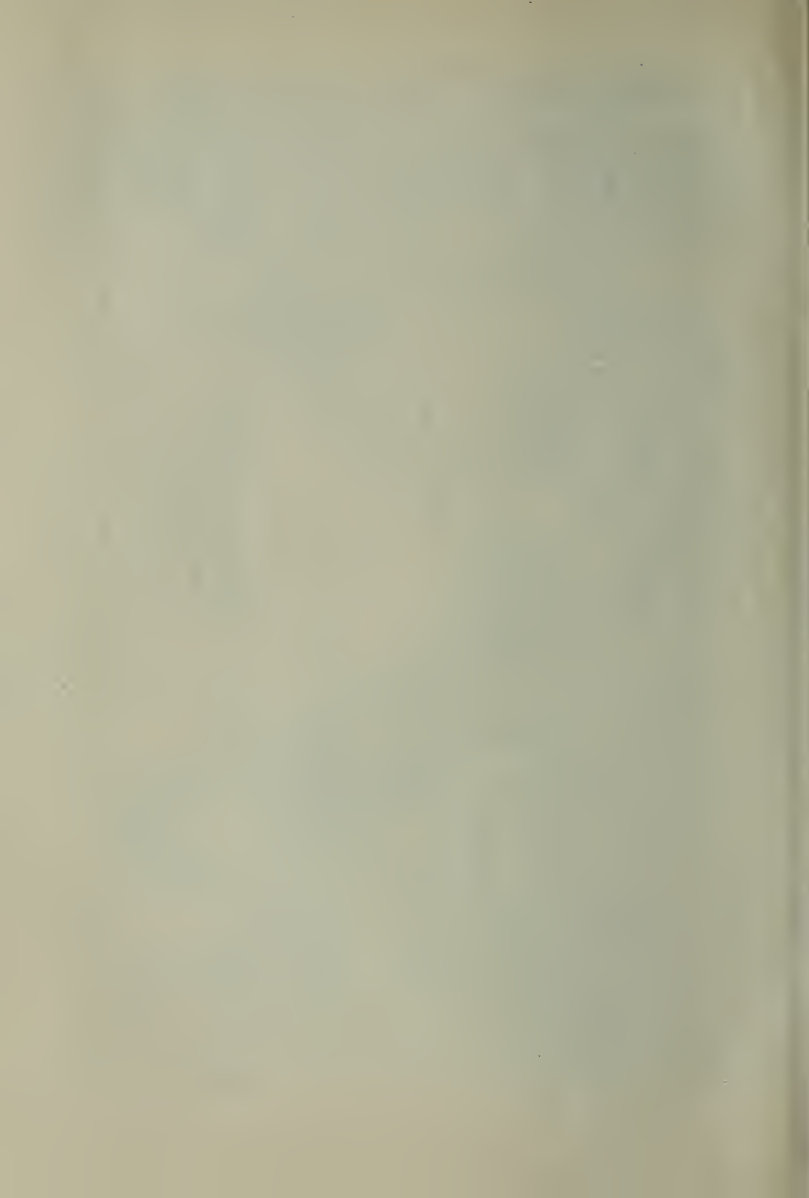
Above all, they fought for Jehovah, and they never forgot that to Him there was no restraint to save by many or by few. They benefited much by the intrigues that were for ever threatening the powerful Syrian government with dismemberment. The domestic feuds of the Seleucid royal family disaffected the Syrian generals, disorganised the army, and lost them battles. But the success of the

Maccabæan party was mainly due to the power of God operating through their love of Zion and their zeal for the holy laws. God was on their side, and none had better right to say :

“The patriot’s God peculiarly Thou art,  
His Friend, Inspirer, Guardian and Reward.”







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